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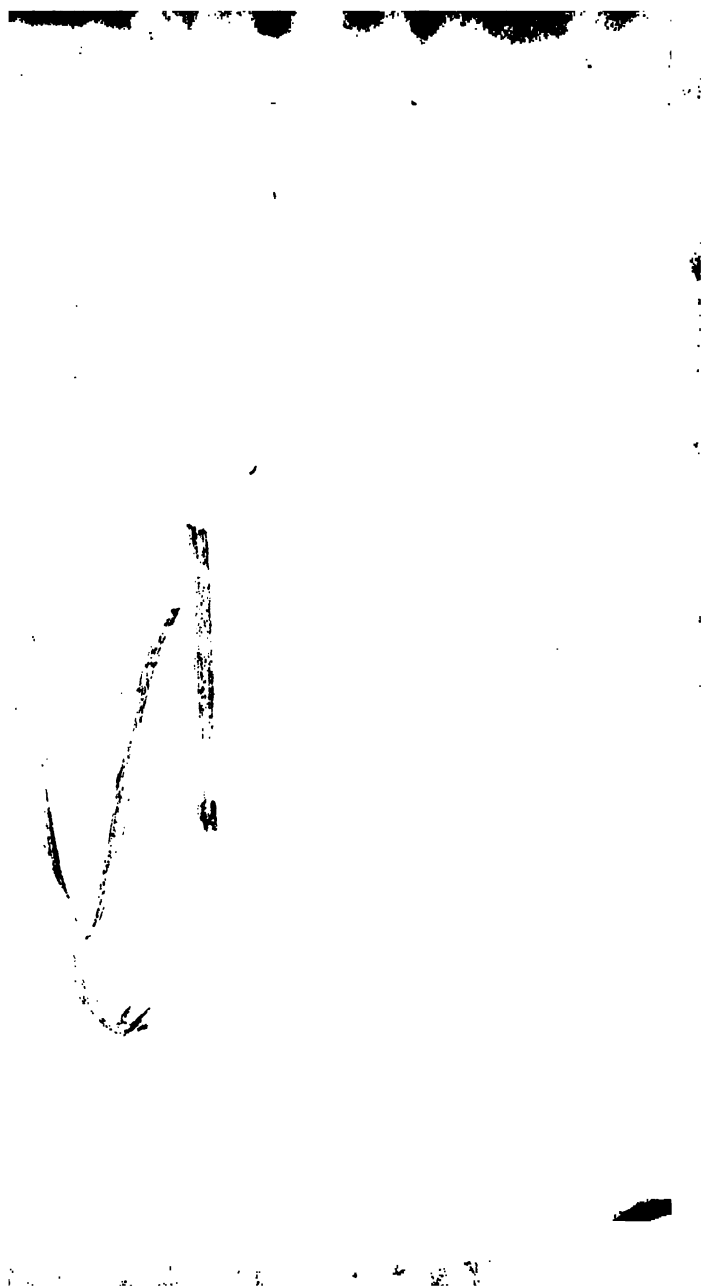
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REV. DAVID PICKERING.

PROVIDENCE, R.I.

*Pub. by Samuel W. Wheeler*

1831.

# LECTURES

## IN DEFENCE OF DIVINE REVELATION,

DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSALIST CHAPEL,

IN PROVIDENCE, R. I.

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BY DAVID PICKERING,

*Pastor of the First Universalist Church and Society.*

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"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."—*St. Paul.*

SECOND EDITION.

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PROVIDENCE.

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1831.



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*Rhode-Island District, sc.*

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on this tenth day of February, A. D. one thousand eight hundred and thirty, and in the fifty-fourth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Samuel W. Wheeler, of said District, deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the following words, to wit:—

“Lectures in Defence of Divine Revelation, delivered at the Universalist Chapel in Providence, R. I. by David Pickering, Pastor of the First Universalist Church and Society.”

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things.”

“Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.”—*St. Paul.*

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BENJAMIN COWELL,  
*Clerk of the Rhode-Island District.*

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In presenting the SECOND EDITION of these Lectures to the notice, and for the patronage of a christian community, it is gratifying to the Publisher to be able to accompany them with the following brief testimonials of approbation, from gentlemen whose well known abilities will not fail to entitle them to a respectful consideration.

The following recommendations have been addressed to the Publisher, by the gentlemen whose names are prefixed to their respective certificates :—

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From **Rev. LINAS S. EVERETT, Pastor of the Universalist Church, Charlestown, Mass.**

"I have read "Lectures in defence of Divine Revelation," by Rev. David Pickering, with great satisfaction. They evince much labor, and are replete with historical information and sound argument. A work of the kind was much needed, and the author has conferred a great favor upon community by furnishing its members with this valuable result of his investigations. It is devoutly hoped that christians of all denominations will feel inclined to extend its circulation, and avail themselves of the invaluable instruction its pages afford.

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From **Rev. CHARLES HUDSON, Pastor of a Church, Westminster, Mass. Author of "A Series of Letters," "Reply," &c.**

"I have perused with attention, Pickering's Lectures in defence of Divine Revelation. I am highly pleased with these discourses, and I consider them a work of real merit, containing more valuable information of a historical kind, on the subject of which they treat, than any work of the size that has fallen into my hands. The work is of the popular kind, but is at the same time, sufficiently critical to engage the attention, and gratify the taste of the scholar. The arrangement is good, and the topics are well selected. The reasoning is direct, clear and manly; and the principal arguments in support of divine revelation are brought home to the understanding with a force and energy calculated to produce conviction in every reflecting breast. The gross inconsistencies, the vain boasts, the artful cavils, and the unblushing ignorance and temerity of unbelievers, are exhibited in their naked deformity, and exposed with a master's hand. The work is highly creditable to the talents and research of the author, and should be in every family library."

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## PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

With every sincere believer in divine revelation, it is a subject of rejoicing, that the providence of God has placed within our reach, such historical evidence as is found sufficient for the entire defence of that religion which inspires the rational and confident assurance of a happy immortality beyond the grave.

Deprived of this inestimable blessing, and left to the uncertain conjectures which might arise in the mind, from the contemplation of the works of nature and providence, our existence would afford us but little enjoyment; and that little would be constantly embittered with the reflection, that we must shortly part with what we hold most dear, when the feeble taper of life should be extinguished in the darkness of the grave, since the volume of nature and providence furnish no clear and positive evidence of any existence after this mortal tenement shall have crumbled into its native dust.

The design of the following Lectures has been fairly to meet, and candidly answer and refute, the most important and popular objections which infidelity has opposed to the truth and inspiration of revealed religion.

The *first edition*, having met with a more favourable reception from the public, than the publisher anticipated, he is induced to believe that the *author* has not labored in vain to promote the interests of revealed religion.

To excite inquiry, to elicit truth, to promote the knowledge and love of God, to spread the name and religion of Jesus Christ, and by thus doing, to advance the true interests and happiness of mankind,

have been the leading motives, in presenting these Lectures to the public.

The work will be found to contain more useful historical information, on the subjects to which it is devoted, than any other of the size and price ; and nothing which can reasonably offend *any Christian* of any denomination. As the work becomes known, it is confidently believed, that it will be found in the hands of those at least, who are friendly to christianity, and who are able to procure it.

THE PUBLISHER.

*Providence, July, 1831.*

## LECTURE I.

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JOB xxi. 15.

“What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?”

Such was the language of unbelief in the days of the patriarch Job; and such has been the language of those who knew not God, in every succeeding age. A portion of mankind have, in all ages of the world, been found to indulge a propensity to cast off the restraints of fear and reverence, and finally to call in question the existence of the Supreme Being, and his government of the natural and moral world. And, my hearers, it requires neither the wisdom of Solomon, nor the inspiration of Paul, to describe the certain consequences of such infidelity. It prostrates at a single blow, the fairest temple that ever graced and beautified the creation of God, **THE TEMPLE OF VIRTUE !**

But you may, perhaps, inquire; is there in creation, a *wretch*, so devoid of reason and principle, as to deny the being of a God? Yes, my friends, there are multitudes, who in theory deny this truth; and still more, who, in practice, evince that they are destitute of any proper sense of their accountability to the laws and institutions of his moral government; and are, therefore, in every practical sense of the word, involved in all the darkness of atheistical infidelity!

It has been a question of doubtful solution, with some, whether there ever was a being, possessing moral intelligence, who could be so far blinded and depraved, as to call in question the truth, that a Being of infinite power and wisdom, created and governs the universe. But the modern boldness and daring attitude of skepticism has dissipated this illusion, and taught us that we have yet to contend,

upon logical and philosophical principles, that the universe was created, and is governed by the agency of an infinitely wise and Almighty Being. Indeed, the words of our text afford sufficient evidence that there were men of this description in former ages, notwithstanding all the plain and impressive indications of a divine and intelligent First Cause, scattered throughout the boundless immensity and endless variety of the works of creation and providence. Hence the necessity of meeting characters of this description upon the ground of their own choice, and of employing the weapons upon which they profess to depend, becomes obvious to every candid and reflecting mind.

Those who call in question the existence of a Supreme Being, alternately affect to be very wise and very ignorant. At one time you may hear them expatiating upon the astonishing laws and properties of nature; admiring the order, regularity and harmony of the physical universe, and really enthusiastic in their encomiums upon the wisdom, beauty and exuberance of nature: They appear to take delight in wandering back through the history of antique ages, and drawing from the records of olden time, the evidence of nature's constant and unchanging profusion. They will often profess a profound veneration and respect for the wisdom of nature's laws, and gravely philosophize upon the moral and social duties of mankind. But simply ask them whence these laws originated; from whom sprang this admirable order, regularity and harmony, so visible in the physical universe; and who is the author of nature, with all the profusion of blessings which it brings to man? and they will then change their position, and begin to plead the inability of mankind to form any correct conclusion of the source whence they had their origin; and of course, endeavour to persuade you, that for aught we know, they existed without beginning. With such pleas, and by confident appeals to man's ignorance of what he

does not absolutely see, hear, feel, taste or smell, they have succeeded in many cases, in silencing those whose opportunities have not permitted them to read and investigate the subject with judgment and success: It may therefore be useful to push our inquiries still further, and if possible, sift this skeptical theory to the bottom.

What do these men, these pretended philosophers, mean by *nature*? Do they mean any thing more than the materials which compose the *solar system*, of which the globe we inhabit is a part? If this be their meaning, then *nature*, according to their system, is nothing more nor less than an immense mass of simple and elementary substances, combining by mere accident, and producing without design, thought, or reflection, all that is wise and unerring in the order of the seasons, all that is lovely on the face of the globe, all the beautiful, all the admirable variety of enamelled flowers, all the wholesome fruits of the field, with all the vast armies of moving life which people every realm! Nor is this all; beings possessing the faculties of thought, reflection, will and memory, are likewise the production of an unthinking, an unreflecting and an *unwilling* cause! But reason would blush to admit that any cause ever produced an effect *above* itself, or that any effect ever existed independent of its cause.

Will the skeptic, to extricate himself from this absurdity, now assert that nature is intelligent? We deny the assertion, and demand the proof; for what is nature, but the material system of things? And is matter intelligent? If so, then are stocks and stones, trees and plants, vegetables and minerals, of every description.—Nay, more; even dead and mouldering carcases are possessed of this noble and distinguishing property! Observation has long since demonstrated to our senses, with sufficient clearness, that nothing can afford the evidence of intelligence, which does not possess animal life. Whatever is destitute of intelligence, must, of necessity, be inca-



pable of design. Matter, therefore, being destitute of this property, could not have produced the order of nature, nor designed the existence of a single form, in all the vegetable kingdom; much less the activity, sprightliness and intelligence, so visible through all the animal tribes of air and earth and seas. This position, therefore, is not only without proof, but it is absolutely unphilosophical, opposed to all tangible evidence, and falls little short of the grossest absurdity.

Matter is capable of being moulded into every variety of form, and the ingenuity of man has converted it to all the purposes of usefulness and convenience. But who ever dreamed that the artist was torturing intelligence, when shaping his iron upon the anvil—melting the precious metals, or refining the silver and the gold by the application of fire? Who ever thought that the sculptor was inflicting misery upon the senseless marble and the passive block of wood, when plying his art, to please the eye and gratify the taste! And who would not blush to be found an advocate for such monstrous absurdities? Yet, the supposition that intelligence is an original and essential property of matter, necessarily involves this conclusion; since it is a well-known truth, that the amputation of the smallest parts of an animal form, or of a being possessing life or knowledge, is productive of those keen sensations of misery which always give birth to anxiety for the means of escaping whatever portends their danger of injury or pain. The hypothesis, therefore, that matter is necessarily possessed of intelligence, denotes a credulity and extravagance bordering upon madness.

Perhaps we may be told, that although matter is not absolutely intelligent, yet intelligence is the effect of a peculiar and happy organization of matter. This theory is by no means new, nor will it stand the test of logical investigation. It requires but a moment's reflection to discover that this proposition

is a fair acknowledgment that intelligence is not co-eval with matter, but the *effect* of a *secondary* cause: For it supposes *first*, the existence of matter; *secondly*, a peculiar organization, and *thirdly*, this organization produces an *effect*, which is *intelligence*: So that this wonderful proposition, of Atheistical pedigree, bears its illustrious inventor in unenviable triumph, to the following climax of absurdity—matter is *active* and *unerring*, though entirely *passive* and *unintelligent*! It has, *without* intelligence, produced the most astonishing effect, namely, a perfect system of organization, which indicates one of the profoundest designs of wisdom! And finally, that organization, though equally destitute of wisdom or knowledge, has produced all the intelligence which is displayed through the immensity of the heavens, and is inscribed on all the beauty and variety of this lower world! The authors and disciples of this scheme, are therefore welcome to all the literary fame, and all the philosophical renown, which it is capable of yielding its primogenitors, and the whole train of its sapient foster-fathers.

Let us now bestow a moment's reflection upon the trite reply with which we are frequently furnished by our skeptical opponents, to the question, whence originated all the beautiful scenery of nature, the order and perfect regularity, the infinite variety and harmony of the universe? They tell us with much assurance, that they are all produced by the laws of nature. But what do they mean by the laws of nature—or by any laws? Do they not know that laws are the result of wisdom, of thought, reflection, calculation or design? And can there be design, without a designer? We have before shown that intelligence is not a property of matter; from whence, then, emanated the design which has given birth to the laws of order? Certainly not from an unintelligent source, but from a **Being** of infinite and unerring wisdom. Skeptics often, when interrogated concerning the astonishing effects, which are every

where visible throughout the world, and which infinitely surpass the limits of human agency to accomplish, reply, "they are produced by the laws of nature :". But what are the laws of nature, but plans of intelligence or the designs of a thinking and reflecting mind? and can laws, plans or designs execute themselves? Who does not know that effects are produced by *power*, and not by laws? Laws can do nothing more than mark out the order in which effects are to be accomplished in succession, by the application of physical or moral force. So that all this prating about the wonderful effects which are produced by the laws of nature, is nothing more than a senseless jargon of unintelligible nonsense.

Atheism has assumed still another form, and pleaded the absolute *eternity* of matter. But what authority have Atheists ever produced to prove this hypothesis? Will they pretend that history warrants such an assertion? They dare not do this; for they know that history plainly teaches the creation of the world. Will they assume it as a fact, that philosophy justifies such a conclusion? We reply, that philosophy is utterly incapable of determining the fact, since all the evidence that can have any direct bearing upon the subject, is derived from revelation, and lies not in the path of philosophical speculation. Philosophy is nothing more nor less than the knowledge of things, natural and moral, grounded upon human reason and experience: And does reason teach us that gross particles of matter are intelligent and capable of designing all the beautiful order and harmony with which we are surrounded? And is there any thing in the experience of human beings which teaches them that matter is eternal, uncreated and independent?—for it must be independent, if it be eternal! But who does not know that matter is so far subservient to human power and human ingenuity, as to be converted into every variety of form, and to every purpose of convenience? We have before shown that intelligence is

not an original property of matter; and taken a passing notice of the hypothesis, that intelligence is the effect of organization: And although the gross absurdity and impossibility of this theory has been plainly pointed out, it may yet be useful to observe that the most obvious facts forbid its admission. For example: A shock of electric fluid will instantly extinguish animal life, without producing the slightest change of organic structure:—again; withhold a constant supply of atmospheric air from the lungs of any being, and it destroys animal life, while every organ remains unimpaired. And will any man have the madness and folly to contend that an animal possesses intelligence *without life* ! The supposition is too preposterous, even to be named; and yet the atheistical scheme which we have noticed, involves this, with numerous other absurdities, equally repugnant to reason and philosophy.

There is one plea which has been urged in favor of the absolute eternity of matter, which we feel bound to notice, as considerable dependence has been placed upon what it supposes to be an undeniable fact. The advocates of this scheme assert, with great apparent triumph and assurance, that matter is indestructible; that it cannot be annihilated, or by any means made to cease or disappear. But we demand—how do our opponents know that matter is incapable of being destroyed? Have they any demonstrative proof of what they assert? Permit me, then, to tell them that this is a mere assumption, without any solid evidence for its support. Am I told in reply, that we cannot annihilate a single particle of matter; that when we decompose any material substance, it is only separated, so that each particle of its composition returns to its native element? This fact is readily admitted;—but does this prove that matter cannot be destroyed? To show the weakness of this argument, let me ask in return, can we originate a single particle of matter? Can we create a spire of grass? And is it surprising

that we are not furnished with the power to annihilate what we have no power to originate? Again—is the inability of man, who is the creature of a day, and every moment dependent on a higher power than he can boast, for every breath he draws, and for every pulsation of the heart, a sufficient evidence of the indestructibility of matter? No man who possesses any thing like a fair claim to the gift of reason, will venture to defend a proposition so absurd and extravagant.

I expect, my hearers, to be able to prove by fair and tangible evidence, that the globe, which we inhabit, had a beginning; and if it had a beginning, it is evident to reason, that the same power which gave it being, can destroy and strike it out of existence.

I am aware that some professors of christianity have admitted, yea, even contended for the eternity of matter: But, my friends, they know not whereof they affirm, or else they are Atheists in disguise. For how is it possible for God to be the FIRST CAUSE of all things, while matter holds an existence coeval with himself? This theory is opposed to the plain letter of revelation, which teaches us that the Deity “created all things; and for *his* pleasure they are and were created.” It was advanced and defended by Spinoza, a Dutch atheistical philosopher, of the *seventeenth century*, and has found its way into nearly all the systems of modern infidelity.

I would now invite your attention to a few of the leading and direct evidences of the existence of a *divine, omnipotent and infinitely intelligent* FIRST CAUSE; whom we call God, and who is held up to view as the only proper object of our highest veneration and praise; the Author of all worlds and all beings. In doing this it is proper to premise, that whatever had a beginning, must have had an author: for nothing could be more repugnant to reason, than the supposition that any thing could create itself; as this would involve the absurdity, that a thing acted to produce the most astonishing effect before it ex-

isted! and I need not remind you that this is a gross contradiction in terms. If it can therefore be proved that there was a time when the earth did **not** exist, the fact itself will prove that it has been created by some power independent of itself. To this object then, your attention is invited.

The doctrine which attempts to maintain the eternity of matter, must necessarily advocate the hypothesis that there has been an uninterrupted succession of beings like ourselves, without beginning; and the same would be true with respect to every kind of plant and animal which can be found upon the face of the globe. It will not, it cannot be pretended, however, that this theory is supported by history, tradition or philosophy; for all these require some original and well attested facts for their support. These facts being unsupplied from any source, whatever, leaves the whole theory as a matter of mere *unsupported conjecture*. If any evidence, therefore, which opposes this conjecture, can be produced, the theory becomes inadmissible, and must be rejected as a groundless chime-ra, alike unworthy the confidence of the rational, and the support of the candid.

Every man now in existence, knows that he did not create, nor cause himself to be brought into being; and therefore, has the demonstrative evidence that he must have been produced by some cause independent of himself. The same must, of necessity, be true with respect to every man that ever existed upon the face of the globe. You may trace the pedigree of man as far back as the power of imagination can carry you, and the same fact is equally plain: So that it is utterly impossible to suppose a human being who had no beginning, or who was not produced by a cause *independent* of himself. A different theory might be pleaded with some color of plausibility, if there were any human beings that were not subject to organic dissolution: But the present constitution of man forbids the hypothesis.

Reason, therefore, founded upon experience and observation, proves that there must have been a *first man* and *first woman*, from whom the successive generations of the world must have had their origin.— To say that they were the spontaneous productions of nature, is no solution of the difficulty which awaits the adorer of nature ; for he is unable to point us to a single *new* being, or rather, *species* of animals, which has not existed for ages before. So that assertions of the spontaneous production of animals or plants, are disingenuous, and unauthorized by reason, nature and revelation.

To set this subject entirely at rest, and settle the controversy concerning the eternity of matter, or rather, the eternity of this globe, with all its furniture and beautiful order, we may appeal to the science of geology, as affording irrefragible evidence of a period when the earth which we inhabit was not formed, and when neither plant nor animal existed.

The most careful investigation has afforded satisfactory evidence that the interior substance of the earth has been deposited at different periods, and at periods when no organic substances were in being. Those primitive rocks which constitute the internal structure of the globe, are formed into distinct strata, and deposited according to their specific gravity. The *granite*, which is allowed to be the lowest and heaviest of all the strata that has ever been discovered; and the *sienite*, which is the next in order and specific gravity ; afford evident marks of having been once in a soluble or liquid state ; since no other supposition will account for the order in which they are found, lying as they do in a horizontal position. These strata have been carefully examined by scientific observers; yet they have not been found to contain any remains of plants or animals. This fact renders it sufficiently evident that neither plants nor animals existed at the periods of their formation.

Passing on to the next stratum of rock, we find fossil remains of marine plants, and a few marine animals, in a state of petrification. This fact affords conclusive evidence that marine plants and animals existed before those which are found upon the land. In the next and following strata, we meet with various kinds of marine and land plants and animals, and in great abundance : No reason can be offered why land productions, such as plants and animals, should not be found in the *third* stratum of primitive rock, if they existed at the time when this stratum was formed. The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible, that they were not created till after this stratum was formed.

The science of geology, then, affords conclusive evidence, that there has been a time when neither plants nor animals had any existence ; hence it becomes undeniable, that their creation was effected by some power that is infinitely above the utmost stretch of human comprehension. For it must be obvious that no human power can perpetuate existence after it is produced ; and if so, it must be equally certain that no earthly power could ever originate existence itself : Hence we arrive at the undeniable conclusion, that some Being, or Power, perfectly independent of all the vast creation, must have existed anterior to it, and is its divine author.

The hypothesis, that the primitive rocks were once in a soluble or liquid state, may be rendered plain and obvious by a simple and easy experiment. Take an equal proportion of each stratum, and reduce them to an impalpable powder ; place these in a glass tube or cylinder, with a quantity of water ; agitate them by shaking, till they are in a state of perfect confusion or chaos ; then place the vessel where it will be at rest, and in a short time the particles of each will settle according to their specific gravity, so as visibly to form the distinct strata, and in the precise order in which they are found in the bowels of the earth.



After the introduction of these facts and arguments, it may perhaps be acknowledged by skeptics, that all things visible had a beginning ; and that they were produced by some *wise* and *powerful*, yet *unknown* CAUSE. And will such men still deny the being of God ! About what are they contending ? Certainly not about *facts*; but about mere *words* and *names*! A quibble, at which the most fastidious skeptic must *blush* in his sober and reflecting moments. For a being infinitely wise, and powerful, and good, is held up by revelation, as the Author and preserver of the universe.

In speaking of the divine character, it is proper to remark, that as the Author of *all creation*, he must have been *uncreated*, and therefore, existing of necessity from eternity. He must eternally have possessed all the attributes which now characterize him ; since it would be as impossible for any being to produce his own attributes, as it would be to produce his own existence. It follows, therefore, that such a being must of necessity be perfectly independent of all contingencies in the mode of his existence ; since no cause anterior to himself could have existed to determine what that mode of existence should be. Again.—The Creator of all things must possess all his divine attributes to an unlimited extent ; as no possible cause could have existed to prescribe any limits; since this hypothesis would suppose a cause prior to the first ; which is a contradiction in terms. That God is omnipotent, is too clearly demonstrated by the countless variety and magnitude of his works, to admit of denial or doubt. And it is equally certain, that all other attributes which he may possess, are likewise unbounded, since no anterior being or power existed to give them limits. The primary or essential attributes which we ascribe to the Supreme Being, are *wisdom*, *power* and *goodness*. These are all testified by the works of creation and providence. His wisdom devised the perfect design of the vast creation,

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and provided for all possible contingencies which might transpire. His power insures the execution of all his designs, and upholds and sustains unnumbered worlds and beings: and his infinite goodness takes delight in promoting and perfecting the happiness of his creatures. All other perfections which are supposed to dwell in him, are rather different displays of the power, wisdom and goodness of God, than original and primary attributes of the divine nature. Who can gaze upon the Solar System, or stretch his thoughts into the unbounded immensity of space, where millions of suns and systems are displayed, without feeling impressed with the deepest conviction of the magnificence of the wisdom and power of their divine original ! Well may we give vent to the sentiments of pious admiration, in the appropriate language of the Royal Psalmist—“The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. *There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*”—Ps. xix. 1–4. But we must leave this sublime field of unspeakable magnificence and beauty, to survey those works of the Creator which are within our more immediate reach.

Who can contemplate the innumerable beings of every form and of every grade, which people the globe ; with all their diversity of wants and powers, and their admirable adaptation to all the purposes of activity and pleasure ; together with the ample stores which an universal providence hath supplied to satisfy the wants of every living thing ; and resist the conviction, that a Being infinitely wise and good has brought them into existence ? Who can reflect upon the exquisite skill which is displayed in the configuration of the various organs of the human system ; the perfection of all its parts to answer the purposes for which they were designed,

and especially the incomparable workmanship and mechanical powers of the eye, and not be led to confess a wisdom and a hand divine in their formation? Indeed, they display such evident marks of the power, wisdom and goodness of the Creator, that we are led to conclude that the most criminal stupidity alone, can fail to observe them with emotions of sincere pleasure and gratitude. How is it possible for an intelligent being to doubt the existence of God, when he beholds himself surrounded by such an infinite variety as must astonish every beholder, and which can scarcely fail to captivate the soul with admiration at the astonishing skill and contrivance which are every where displayed throughout the countless whole? In a word—the varying seasons of the year, loaded and crowned with the profusion of the divine bounty, join in sweet accordance with the voice of inspiration, in announcing that “God left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

What has been offered is deemed sufficient to show that the proofs afforded by physical science; and the metaphysical and philosophical evidences which are drawn from the open volume of nature and providence, render a belief in the existence of the Supreme Being, a most easy, rational and unavoidable exercise of the understanding. And we can scarcely conceive it possible for any man to support a fair claim to intelligence, who, amidst all the evidences of design which are every where displayed in the kingdom of nature, can deny the glorious being and attributes of the Maker and Preserver of all systems, worlds and beings.

If then, the existence and attributes of God be admitted, and I can discover no reason for their denial, since the whole volume of nature is crowded with evidences of their certainty; there can be no impossibility in the supposition of his making a re-

velation of his character, truth and designs to man; for it is a proposition self-evident to every human being, that he possesses moral intelligence, and is capable of constant improvements and the noblest attainments in the science of moral virtue and happiness. What possible reason, then, can be urged that man should not be furnished with that kind of instruction which is so perfectly suited to the elevation of his moral nature? No reason can be assigned why he should not be the subject of such a revelation, except it can be shown that he is not in a condition to need its instruction. But this cannot be shown; nor shall we allow the enemies of revelation to take it for granted, since it is totally *inadmissible*, and *contrary* to the testimony of *universal experience*. Matter of fact has long since proved that mankind are short-sighted and erring mortals—that they often mistake the path of happiness, fall into acts of indiscretion, commit atrocious wickedness, destroy their own peace and involve the happiness of those around them. The more ample and pure, therefore, the moral instruction which man receives, the less liable will he be to become a prey to the numerous evils and miseries which are inseparable from a life of depravity and wickedness. And the more constant, unremitting and sincere, his attention becomes to the pure and holy rules which it prescribes, the more refined and elevated will be his enjoyment. I can scarcely conceive it necessary to say to you, my hearers, that what we call a revelation from God, contains the purest system of morality which has ever been presented for the observance of man. Indeed, this fact has been acknowledged by the ablest writers who have ever espoused the cause of infidelity. Admitting, therefore, that the Being who created man possesses the attributes of infinite wisdom and love, reason would inevitably lead us to expect from him a revelation of his will and his truth.

Having, as we believe, adduced sufficient evidence

to establish in the rational and reflecting mind the belief of a supreme and intelligent *First Cause*, the unerring Ruler of the whole universe ; and shown the consistency of the hypothesis that he has revealed his mind and will to man, we shall now devote a few reflections upon the nature of that service which he requires of his intelligent offspring.

The perfections of the divine nature must necessarily impress us with the conviction that he possesses all the resources of infinite enjoyment within himself, and therefore could never require any service from the creature man to promote his own happiness, that being already infinitely full and perfect. The conclusion is then unavoidable, that he requires no service of his creatures, except that which would conduce to their own, and the happiness of beings like themselves. That man was formed for activity, is too evident from his constitution, both of body and mind, to require a single argument for its support. And is any conclusion more consistent with the dictates of reason, than that a being of perfect goodness should direct these powers to be employed in such a manner as to promote the security of his present enjoyment and refine his soul for higher attainments of moral perfection and happiness ? No man can be found in human society, who does not feel and know that he possesses the gift of moral intelligence ; and if it were consistent for the Author of nature to furnish him with such powers, what reason can be assigned why the Deity should not impose on him such obligations as are correspondent to the nature and extent of those distinguishing powers which he has bestowed ? Indeed, the possession of these powers were vain and useless, if wisdom had not assigned them some suitable exercise, or directed their employment to some useful end.

The inquiry may now, and will doubtless be urged ; what are the services which God requires of his intelligent offspring ? We answer : they are just

such services as might rationally be expected would be demanded by a being of infinite wisdom and goodness. They require us to cultivate an acquaintance with the character of God, and to make him the object of supreme love and adoration, as the inexhaustible source of all perfection and happiness.—To love him with all the heart, mind and strength, as the surest means of securing that constant obedience, which would invariably promote our own, and the highest enjoyment of the moral creation of God. In a word ; the sum of all his moral requirements is to imitate the displays of his justice, his wisdom and his benevolence. To “love one another with pure hearts, fervently ; out of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” To cultivate *peace* and friendship with all mankind ; “to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, to bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us.” This would render us the practical imitators of our Father in heaven ; an unspeakable blessing to the world ; qualify us for the approbation of God, and the highest enjoyments of which our natures are susceptible. Surely, then, the service which God requires is of the most ennobling kind, and the most honorable, as well as the most advantageous employment of our powers. And instead of questioning the authority of these obligations, we ought rather to rejoice and thank God that he has furnished us with powers for their performance. Is it now demanded, “What is the Almighty that we should serve him ?” We answer ; He is the glorious sovereign of heaven and earth ; on whom all creatures depend, and at the bar of whose impartial justice we must all render an account for the improvement of our time, our talents, and all the blessings and privileges which his wisdom and bounty bestow. Hence the necessity of diligence and constant perseverance in all the duties and services which he requires at our hands.

I shall now pass to a few remarks upon the pro-

priety, reasonableness, duty and necessity of prayer.

Prayer is the devout aspiration of the soul, the offering up of our desires to the God and Father of the spirits of all flesh. To this religious exercise, objections of various kinds have been offered. It has been pronounced inconsistent with the sentiments which we ought to entertain of the infinite wisdom and goodness of the Creator: For we are told that Jehovah knows all our wants, and will, if consistent with what he knows to be for his glory and our good, bestow all needed blessings, without being importuned by weak and erring man. As plausible as this objection may appear, it is both unsound and deceptive: For as parents, you are aware of most of the wants and necessities of your children, before they are expressed, or even known to these children; and would you consider it improper, or incompatible with that filial and dignified respect which they ought to pay to you, to enumerate their wants, and ask the display of your kindness in supplying those wants? So far from this, you would consider it rather a mark of *disrespect* if they neglected to ask the bestowment of your favor.

Again.—Prayer is an acknowledgment of our dependence on God, for all the blessings and mercies which our condition requires. And is it not one of the strongest expressions of our sense of dependence to bow before the throne of the universe, in humble invocation for the blessings which he alone can bestow? That it is eminently calculated to promote and keep alive the virtues of humility and meekness, is evident from the very nature of the exercise which the duty implies.

It is also proper to remark, that prayer is necessary to excite and maintain the duties of gratitude and devotion. For it is a fact, attested by common observation and common experience, that what we receive without asking for, seldom commands a grateful return, or a thankful tribute of the heart. And so far as the duty of devotion to God is con-

cerned, prayer is absolutely essential to its existence; for whoever neglects the wholesome duty of prayer, will be sure to cast off most of the salutary restraints of religious fear.

The duty of prayer is equally necessary in keeping alive a sense of the divine presence : And where is the man whose thoughts and moral feelings would not be chastened and his life amended, by a sober conviction that God is present with him, and is familiar with all the secrets of his soul and all the purposes of his heart ?

It is the means which God has appointed for the depressed and afflicted mind to unburden itself and cast off its gloomy thoughts and cares, and catch a glimpse of heavenly glory and peace. It is one of the highest privileges which we can enjoy in this vale of tears, to draw nigh to God in prayer and thanksgiving, and hold communion with our Maker. Then is the world with all its busy cares, dismissed, while God and heavenly things gently absorb the powers of reflection, and kindle up unspeakable raptures in the conscious soul.

No privilege ought more highly to be prized than that of bending with reverence before the throne of mercy and love, in devout acknowledgment of our dependence upon God, and in the spirit of unaffected humility to implore his grace in the forgiveness of our sins, and to seek the salutary instructions of his wisdom to direct us in the faithful discharge of every duty. Here, at the footstool of heaven, the afflicted heart may pour forth its strong desires, present its needy condition, and commit all its interests to him who delights to communicate his favors and extend his gracious protection and relief to the suffering and the oppressed. Nor is this duty incompatible with the first dictates of the law of nature: For it cannot be denied that the burden of affliction gives birth to those ardent desires of the soul, and acts as an impelling force in moving us to seek the assistance of a superior agency, and



prompts us to lean upon a power which is independent of ourselves.

Prayer is a duty every where enjoined by the authoritative language of holy inspiration, and sanctioned by the luminous examples of patriarchs and prophets, from time immemorial; by the precept and worthy example of the Son of God, and by the examples and commands of all his apostles, to whom the unerring instructions of the spirit of divine inspiration were given. So that reason, nature and revelation, all harmonize to impress this duty upon the mind of man.

It is true that the Deity can neither be benefitted, affected, nor changed by the prayers of his creatures; but it is man, himself, that is benefitted, affected and changed. It is a method appointed by infinite wisdom to relieve the troubled mind of its sorrows and its woes; to tranquilize the feelings of the heart, and to strengthen and renew the confidence of the soul in the God of the whole earth.

Finally, Prayer is evidently a duty, which, according to the scriptures, has been enjoined by the Creator and Preserver of the world. This fact being admitted, it follows of necessity that it is the subject of reward, and is therefore connected with blessings which will not, and cannot in equity, be received and enjoyed without a compliance with the command. So that he who "casts off fear and restrains prayer," robs himself of heaven's blessing; withholds the honor which is due to God; incurs the disapprobation of the Sovereign of all worlds, and brings condemnation and misery to himself. Let these considerations sink deep into our hearts; and when we retire from this public assembly to our respective habitations, let the importance of those services which God requires, impress us with gratitude, solemnity and joy; and lead us to seek, in secret retirement of the heart, a peaceful and prayerful intercourse with our Maker; that we may ever bear the seal of his divine approbation, and enjoy the

sweet and cheering "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

In the course of Lectures which has been commenced this evening, it is my intention, by divine permission, to lay before you, a brief but plain and systematical defence of divine revelation. This contains the only charter of all our choicest hopes, and is the only true and infallible guide to immortality and eternal life.

## LECTURE II.

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ISAIAH xl. 5.

"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

In my former Lecture, I laboured, (and I trust not without some degree of success,) to prove, from the evidences of nature and the demonstrations of physical science, the being and attributes of God; and to deduce from the evidences of the divine existence and government of God, the nature of that service which must be acceptable to him as a guardian, friend and Parent.

We endeavored to show by the most plain and undeniable facts which are brought to light by the science of geology, that there must have been a time when the globe which we inhabit did not exist as a solid body, but was in a confused, soluble and chaotic state.—That the particles which constitute the internal structure of the earth were deposited in perfect order, according to their specific gravity. That in the lower strata of the primitive rocks of which the earth is composed, no fossil remains are to be found, which demonstrates, that at the time those substances were deposited, there existed neither plants nor animals; otherwise some remains of them would have been there deposited, as well as in the other strata which lie nearer the surface, where such remains are found in a state of petrification, in all their profusion of variety.

We were led by these facts to the unavoidable conclusion, that there was a time when the earth did not exist, and when neither the vegetable nor animal kingdoms were in being: And if there was a period when these did not exist, they must have been produced by some power which was independent of them: For it would be an affront to common

sense to say that they produced themselves, as this would be nothing less than to affirm that they acted and produced the most astonishing effects before they existed! or, in other words, that nonentity produced the reality of all things!

In that Lecture, an appeal was made to the perfect order and harmony, which every where prevail throughout the physical universe, as affording demonstrative evidence that the cause by which they were produced must of necessity be possessed of perfect wisdom and inconceivable power.

It was shown that design was too apparent through the infinite variety of nature, to leave a rational doubt upon the intelligent mind, that they were the production of the combined energies of infinite intelligence and omnipotence: While the capacities of the whole animal creation, for enjoyment, suited to their various natures; with the ample provision which is made for their respective wants and desires, were called in to support the conclusion that the Being who created and governs the countless whole, must be perfect in wisdom, almighty in power, and unlimited, or unconfined in goodness.

Having arrived at this legitimate conclusion, by the aid of sensible objects, and established the fact of the divine existence by the undeniable evidences of nature; we briefly considered the kind of service which such a Being might be reasonably supposed to require of those on whom he had bestowed the gift of reason, and fixed the moral image of his own nature, which could be none other than that of imitating his goodness by efforts to promote the true interest and happiness of our species, whose condition is evidently such as to admit of continual improvement. We also offered some plain and pointed arguments, showing the fitness, the duty, the reasonableness, necessity and moral influence of prayer.

With this brief notice of our introductory Lecture, we shall proceed to the object proposed; name-

ly, to offer a regular course of Lectures in defence of divine revelation.

It would be a vain and useless labour to defend revelation, unless it could be made to appear that mankind needed such a revelation. The object therefore of our present labours will be to establish the fact that the condition of the world was such as to require a revelation from God for the improvement and happiness, the moral virtue and usefulness of its inhabitants. To accomplish this object, we shall plainly and faithfully contrast the situation of man, while left to the sole guidance of nature, reason and philosophy, with his condition and improvements under the light of revelation: This will afford us a fair opportunity of judging whether a revelation was, or was not necessary to enlarge the sphere of his usefulness, and to advance the knowledge, refinement and happiness of human society.

In doing this, we will not be so ungenerous as to select the most barbarous and ignorant nations which the history of the heathen world presents, but we will select the most polished and enlightened nations, where we find most to admire and approve: Where nature has shed her kindest gifts, and where philosophy has exerted her powers and diffused her happiest influence; and if these will not bear a comparison with those nations who have been favored with the light of revelation, the necessity of such a revelation will be too clearly established to admit of a fair and reasonable doubt.

It would be impossible to determine with any degree of certainty, what discoveries human reason would be capable of making, unless we survey its acquisitions and discoveries, independent of the lights and improvements which revelation has furnished. We can only arrive at an accurate investigation of its powers, by examining what it has brought to light, when it stood unaided and alone.

It cannot be denied, that in the days of *Socrates*, *Plato* and *Cicero*, science unveiled her splendors,

and exerted her powers for the enlightening and improvement of mankind: Nor can it be denied that philosophy was then in the very zenith of her glory, or that reason had attained the meridian of her strength. But we demand, (and the demand is made with confidence,) whether *reason, science and philosophy*, in their combined efforts, produced any system so honorable to the Supreme Being; so congenial to the wants and happiness of man; so fruitful in the glories of moral excellence, or so refined in the hopes and virtues to which it gave birth, as that system of truth which revelation has unfolded to the view of the world? The most hardened and unblushing skepticism dare not answer this question in the affirmative. For skeptics know that such an assertion would be confronted by the most stubborn facts.

The splendid elucidations of the divine benignity; the unspeakable consolations of mercy and grace; the endless felicities of eternal life, and the indescribable glories of immortality, were neither recognised by the philosophy of Socrates and Plato, nor embraced by the flowing periods which have thrown so much lustre around the character of the Roman orator. The depth of scientific research, which was the boast of Greece; the polite literature which distinguished the Athenians; and the senatorial wisdom which illuminated the halls of imperial Rome, fall equally short of elevating the mind to the sublime heights to which it is exalted by the powerful and glorious light of revelation.

The faithful records of history present us with a gloomy picture of the moral condition of man, when left solely to the guidance of nature and reason.—Although surrounded with the beauty and luxuriance of nature; though enchanted with the vivifying influence of spring; surrounded with the glories of summer; loaded with the plenteous fruits of autumn, and taught by experience to lay by a store of the blessings of Providence to supply his wants in

the dreary period of winter; man, with all his advantages and blessings, formed but vague and imperfect conjectures of the source whence these blessings flowed.

He saw that the seasons had their appointed periods, and was therefore led to conclude that an overruling intelligence presided over the destinies of nature. Hence an atheist was viewed as the most astonishing phenomenon, and as a monster among men. Still, having no clear conceptions of any existence distinct from matter, he was led to suppose that the Author of the universe might be visible.—And what object could so naturally and forcibly attract his attention, as the luminous king of day; from whose influence so many blessings and comforts were enjoyed? If any visible object was worthy of divine adoration, the Persians might well be excused for rearing an altar to the Sun, and bowing down with devout adoration to this most glorious of all visible objects. Next to the *Sun*, the *Moon*, which dispelled the gloom of night, and marked the distinct periods into which the year was divided, was thought worthy to share in the divine honors which were almost universally paid to the ruler of day.

It is sufficiently apparent from history, that the sun and moon were worshipped by the Phœnicians, Canaanites, Chaldeans, Moabites, and in fact by all the eastern nations, from the earliest periods to which their history can be traced. Baal (*the sun*) and Astaroth (*the moon*) which is also called in scripture the queen of heaven, were objects of universal adoration throughout the heathen world. The idol Moloch, so often mentioned in scripture, signifies the same as Baal, a king, or ruler, and is therefore supposed to be the sun. Diana (or the moon) the goddess of hunting and the goddess of months, was called in scripture, as we have before remarked, “the queen of heaven.” After the sun and moon; the smaller luminaries, which bestud the boundless concave,

were considered of the same nature with the sun and moon, and therefore entitled to share with them the honors of worship, though not to the same extent, on account of the inferiority of their apparent glory.

During the Chaldean, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman monarchies, the sun, the moon, the planets and the fixed stars were all adored as gods; and while the adoring Persian reared his altar to the Sun, and the Greek bowed with reverence at the shrine of Saturn, the deluded worshipper of the Queen of Heaven, rent the air with the acclamation "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians!*" Nature was also worshipped under the name of this goddess, as the mother of all things, which will account for the peculiar appearance of her statues, covered from the shoulders to the lower extremities of the waist, with the emblems of nutriment, for the support of her children, which were represented upon all the body and limbs below, by the heads of various animals.

The objects which were worshipped by the ancient heathen, are too numerous for a minute detail. In Egypt, besides the most grotesque figures of animals; or symbolical figures, compounded of man, and some animal; as the head of a dog on the body of a man; the head of a cat on the body of a woman; they worshipped oxen, crocodiles, serpents, sparrow-hawks, ravens, insects, and even the herbs of their gardens: strange objects, indeed, to receive divine honors!

The heathen had idols of all sorts to worship; idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, wood, potters' earth, stars, spirits, men, animals, rivers, plants, trees, fountains, and even rough stones! The Arabians, before the days of Mahomet, paid divine honors to a certain black stone, which at this day is fastened in the wall at the temple of Mecca, and is devoutly kissed by Mahometans. They adored, in addition to this stone, spears, lances, great beams of timber, fire, animals, the sun, moon, stars, earth,



flowers, plants, trees and fountains ! And we may add; the ancient Gauls and Germans, had scarce any other gods.

These idolators attributed to many of their gods and goddesses, the most ungovernable passions, and in their devotions they practiced the most abominable obscenity and lewdness. This fact can easily be accounted for, if we reflect for a moment upon the probable causes which gave birth to their idolatry. This undoubtedly originated in the darkness of their minds, ignorance, vanity, pride, love of pleasure, fondness for sensible objects, libertinism, and in strong animal passions ; the excessive affection of lovers ; the mistaken tenderness of a father for his child ; the husband for the wife, and the wife for the husband ; great respect of subjects for their Prince, and of children for their parents ; gratitude to the memory of benefactors ; the splendid qualities of statesmen, and that admiration which the exploits of heroes and conquerors has almost universally excited ; together with the indelible impression which has through all ages been fixed upon the human mind, of the existence of a Divine and Superior Cause. These have induced man to pay superstitious respect, worship and adoration, to what he loved, admired, esteemed, feared, or honored to great excess.

The thought suggested itself to the minds of the ancients, that a resemblance of the gods which they worshipped, was desirable, to heighten the fervor of their devotions ; hence images were raised and multiplied to an astonishing extent. But the infatuation of man at length became so great, that every object around him was deified. A conqueror, who had desolated kingdoms, deluged nations in blood, caused rivers of tears to flow, and rent the hearts of widows and orphans with anguish which defies the power of language to describe, received divine honors from those who were deluded by his exploits, and dazzled with the splendor of his military achieve-

ments. A successful agriculturist was adored, as presiding over the productions of the earth ; a successful astronomer at Babylon was worshipped as the king of heaven ; a man who announced the return of periodical winds, was supposed to have charge of the storms, and therefore worshipped under the name of Æolus. Another, who braved the fury of the winds and waves, and conducted his frail bark across the ocean in safety, was supposed to be a god, and a constellation in the heavens still bears the name of the hero and his ship ; while another, by discovering the medicinal virtues of plants, was deified as the god of medicine, and worshipped under the name of Esculapius. We may add to all these, that tyrants after tyrants were deified by their successors, till the supposed infernal regions were crowded with cruel, merciless, and revengeful gods!

Those gods which were worshipped in some countries as supreme, held only a subordinate place in others ; so that their deluded worshippers were continually disagreeing, as to which of them the honor of supreme worship belonged. They were more generally agreed, however, as to the character and attributes of their gods, and that, what they termed divine honors, belonged to each and every one ; and this fact will account for the astonishing number of about *thirty thousand*, which were enrolled in the catalogue at Rome, and to whom divine honors were authorized to be paid by the Roman laws.

Of all the gods which were worshipped by the heathen, Jupiter, who is called the son of Saturn, and was said to have stripped his father of the kingdom of Crete, and who is supposed to have lived within three hundred years of the time of Moses, was almost universally adored as the supreme god, and as having the government of heaven and earth. He is represented by the heathen mythology as giving to his brother Neptune the government of the sea, and to Pluto, the government of hell. The character which history ascribes to him is that of

one of the most adulterous, and otherwise unclean wretches that ever breathed. From the time of Alexander the Great, he was held in the highest veneration, both by the Greeks and Latins. His, with the character of many other of the heathen gods, will account for the obscene and lascivious rites of heathen worship, which have branded with the deepest, but merited infamy, the idolatry of the ancients.

I have now given you a brief summary of the objects which were worshipped by those nations who were left to the sole direction of nature, reason and philosophy: And I ask you to compare them to the glorious object of adoration which revelation unfolds to the mental view of man. Compare them with that God who has revealed himself as the infinite fountain of power and intelligence: the Creator and governor of all worlds: unchangeable in all the designs of his infinite wisdom and goodness; and then decide for yourselves, which is the most rational and ennobling, the service of those detestable characters, or the service and worship of this only living and true God.

The worship which the ancients paid to Jupiter, Venus and Bacchus, was too obscene and abominable to be described. Lasciviousness, debauchery and drunkenness were sanctioned, encouraged, applauded and practiced, under the venerable name of religion. The more infamous and beastly these rights were, the more acceptable they were supposed to be to the gods they worshipped. But modesty compels us to draw a veil over the scenes of such depravity and wickedness. Yet, whoever has read the satires of Juvenal, or perused the history of those times, will instantly acknowledge the faithfulness of the picture of their enormities, as delineated by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, chap. i. v. 21—32. In a word, their deeds were so shocking and detestable, that the early christians were forbidden to have them even named in their assemblies.

Besides the disgusting and licentious rites to which we have alluded, the most shocking inhumanity and barbarity was practiced in their worship. It was a common custom among the Carthagenians to sacrifice children to Saturn, and thus to outrage every feeling of humanity. At one time when Agathocles was about to besiege Carthage, *two hundred* children of the first families were offered in sacrifice: and on each returning period for the annual sacrifice, it was customary for those who had no children to purchase them of the poor, for this horrid rite! Innocent children were devoted to the most awful death by their parents, that of being burnt alive in sacrifice, to appease the wrath, or secure the favour of their abominable gods!

In the life of Themistocles, as related by Plutarch, we have a striking exemplification of their horrid barbarity. When Themistocles was about to sacrifice upon the Admiral galley, at Athens, three beautiful captives were brought to him, richly attired with gold vests, and were said to be the children of the sister of Xerxes. As soon as *Euphrantides*, who was supposed to be a prophet, and who presided at the ceremony, saw them, he demanded them as an additional sacrifice. The Athenian Admiral, though shocked with the inhumanity of the thought, and extremely reluctant to comply with his demand, was, however, forced to submit, by the urgent clamors of the populace; and these unfortunate youths were accordingly immolated.

These few examples are only mentioned as a specimen of the horrid barbarity and cruelty, which almost every where prevailed in heathen countries, and which formed one of the most prominent features in the character of their worship. I have forbore to mention the thousands that have been sacrificed by the Druids, or the millions that have perished in every heathen country by the same superstitions, and only selected a few of the most polished and enlightened of the heathen countries where

these horrid atrocities have been performed. These appalling scenes continued to be acted, over and over, until the light of revelation dispelled the gloom of their ignorance. But we must pursue their history.

In the character of their civil institutions, there was little more to admire than in their religions.—Vice was almost universally tolerated, and the principles of humanity outraged in every variety of form. Implacable hatred was cherished as a virtue, and an unforgiving spirit held the rank of bold and manly fortitude. Suicide was eulogized by poets and historians as a mark of great mental strength, and the certain evidence of a heroic mind. One of the wisest lawgivers of which the heathen world could boast, ordained that all infants should be exposed to perish, which were in any respect defective or maimed ; or who, from any apparent constitutional weakness, did not hold out the prospect of being serviceable to the state. Thus *infanticide* was not only tolerated, but expressly enjoined by the institutions of Lycurgus, the Spartan legislator, and rigidly observed by that people for ages. The natural and unavoidable result of such unfeeling institutions, was a most pernicious system of morals. Depravity was the legitimate fruit of such a barbarous system of government. There was, indeed, a few, who inculcated different sentiments, and sometimes pleaded the cause of humanity with much eloquence and pathos. But their example was so pernicious, that their better code of precepts had very little influence upon the manners of their countrymen.—And in reading the history of the heathen world, it is extremely difficult to determine what they called vice, unless it was the weakness of cowardice.

The Emperors of Rome were stained with every species of impurity and wickedness ; if we but trace them to the retirements of the palace, where “ they practiced all *manner* of uncleanness with greediness.”

Their systems of philosophy were in some re-

spects refined, but they were not adapted to the mental degradation of the great mass of the common people, and therefore failed to produce any salutary effect upon their morals. The multitude were left to grope in darkness, because they could not comprehend the refinements of the philosophy of that age, and therefore were abused with the grossest absurdities as a substitute for religion.—The mysteries of heathen worship were withheld from the great mass of the people, while the splendid sacrifices which were required for their initiation, were beyond their ability to procure. Hence they were left in ignorance and darkness.

But suppose they were instructed in all the mysteries and in all the wisdom which heathen philosophy could unfold ; would it inspire them with the conviction of the unity of God? would it excite the confident hope of a future happy existence? Heathen philosophy never did produce this effect ; and judging from the influence which it has exerted in past ages, we can form no conception that it possesses any power to illuminate the dark and dreary passage of the grave, or brighten the prospect of man beyond the narrow limits of the tomb.

## LECTURE III.

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ISAIAH xl. 5.

"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

In my preceding Lecture, I laid before you a brief, but faithful epitome of heathen idolatry, comprehending the variety and character of the objects to which they paid religious honors; together with the barbarity and cruelty of their sacrificial offerings, the lascivious and brutal conduct of the worshippers, and the universal prevalence and toleration of the most detestable vices—vices which could not but degrade the human mind, and paralyze all the noblest energies of reason and virtue, to reform the lives and morals of human society! And when we reflect that all these cruelties and abominations were directly countenanced and encouraged by the civil institutions of heathen countries; yea, more—when we reflect that these horrid crimes were lauded as the most acceptable offerings of religion, and the certain means of appeasing the wrath and procuring the favor of the object adored; we ask, with confidence, was not the moral condition of human beings such as to need the light of revelation to instruct, improve and civilize the society of man?

If we were to survey other countries, in later ages, and even down to our own times, we should find little less to excite our pity and astonishment. A great part of the eastern world is still enveloped in the darkness of Mahometan imposture, or groan under the weight of pagan idolatry. The extensive regions of Hindostan, containing about one hundred millions of inhabitants, are principally involved in this deplorable darkness and ignorance, even to the present hour. The worshippers of the ponderous idol of the eastern world, are annually crushed to

death beneath his merciless car, as the willing victims of superstition and the most deplorable ignorance; while the plains of Hindostan are lighted up by the unsparing flames of the funeral pile, and thousands of widows are sacrificed to the most inhuman superstition.

I might notice a fearful catalogue of other cruelties, which are still practiced in heathen countries; but the heart sickens at the horrid picture, and turns with painful sensibility from the scenes of such barbarous superstition, and the eye of pity contributes the tear of regret to the weakness and misery of man, while destitute of revelation's clear and friendly light to illuminate the pathway of his understanding. I shall forbear to mention the sacrifices which were formerly offered by the aborigines of America, as I have forborne to notice the gross idolatry of other barbarous nations; and briefly consider the character of modern heathenism, under the plausible names of *philosophy* and *science*.

These acknowledge no God, but nature, no eternal principal, but matter, and no obligation but such as would contribute to the gratification of passion, or subserve their temporal interest. But of such philosophers, it may well be said, "they worship they know not what." And doubtless they are not aware that they are offering their homage to inert and unconscious matter; to the sun, the moon and the stars; to rocks and mountains, hills and vallies, rivers and plains, oceans and continents; to animals and plants of every description; and even to the grossest passions that ever rankled in the human heart! For these, it cannot be denied, are parts, and the principal parts of nature with which we are acquainted. If there was, therefore, any inconsistency in the worship of those ancient pagans, of whom we have already spoken, the same inconsistency attaches to the character and views of modern skepticism. No wonder, then, that a promiscuous



intercourse should be justified and pleaded, as fancy might suggest or inclination dictate!

Are these thy boasted triumphs, O reason ! Are these thy proud trophies of renown, O philosophy ! Is this the beastly eminence on which ye would place us ? Yes—this is the altar on which we are invited to sacrifice the noble institutions which have emanated from the light of revelation, and diffused their benign influence through all the moral codes of the civilized world !

It is true that Zoroaster, Socrates, Plato, Confucius, Seneca and Cicero, entertained more rational and consistent views of the great *First Cause* of all things, and of the moral and religious obligations of mankind : but the histories of their times prove to us that all the refinements of their philosophy failed to produce the most desirable effects upon their countrymen, and left them still in darkness, and under the shackles of a most despotic and cruel superstition. So that with all the lights and advantages of *nature*, *reason* and *philosophy*, the world groaned under the oppressive weight of ignorance and crime.

I have now briefly delineated the condition of man, without the friendly aid of revelation ; and our hearts have recoiled and sickened at the imperfect picture of human enormities which prevailed throughout the most enlightened, refined and philosophical nations of the earth, which has been laid before you ; notwithstanding we have been compelled by considerations of modesty, to draw a veil over the darkest shades of their abominations. What has been brought to the light, however, is sufficient for all the purposes of a clear and successful contrast. We shall now proceed to compare this deplorable state of society with what we find to be the condition of man under the influence and direction of revealed religion.

It is perfectly apparent from history, that in a short time after the deluge, idolatry became the prevailing religion of the whole post-deluvian world. That

it was almost universally practiced until the days of Abraham, to whom most important truths were communicated, and by him transmitted to his posterity; truths, embracing the character and designs of God, and opening and illustrating the moral duties of man to his Creator. Of this; the Patriarch appears to have been so fully convinced, that he totally forsook the idolatry of his Chaldean countrymen, and betook himself entirely to the worship of one God, as the Creator and Governor of heaven and earth.

History informs us that his sons observed the maxims of truth which he had received, and were, themselves, persuaded of the unity and universal government of God; and that they practiced a purer and more simple worship than their heathen neighbors.

Isaac, who was the legal heir of this Patriarch, with his son Jacob, received a confirmation of the truth revealed to their venerable sire, and transmitted it, with the duties of pure devotion and faith, to the twelve tribes of Jacob, who were trained up in the discipline and admonition of the wisdom and religion of their fathers: And among them, we hear nothing of idolatry for about four hundred years. There might have been, it is true, some examples of departure from the belief of a revelation to their ancestors, but if it were so, history is silent upon the subject.

From the time of the descent of the Israelites into Egypt, till about the period of their exodus, we hear little of them except that a large company of them once revisited the land of their ancestors, to deposit the earthly remains of their revered father.

At length there appears to have been one of their number, reared up in the palace of the Egyptian monarch, who professed to be divinely inspired and instructed to deliver his countrymen and kindred from their bondage and slavery: That he actually led them from the bondage and tyranny of Egypt,

and delivered to them a code of laws, professedly by divine authority, which they received, and acknowledged to be from God. (Whether his authority was divine for what he did, will be discussed in a future Lecture.)

After performing many astonishing prodigies (which we term miracles) for their deliverance and support, a law is presented to them, which sternly prohibits the worship of but one God, accompanied with the assurance that he created and governed the heavens and the earth, and was the proper Ruler and Moral Governor of the universe. It prohibited licentiousness of every description, and prescribed the duties of love and obedience to God, and the obligation of kindness, forbearance and benevolence to mankind. And it is strongly, and with much reason, suspected, that the wisest and best of the heathen philosophers drew the leading features of their systems of morality from this ancient and venerable code.

To the readers of ancient history, it is well known that sacrifices hold a rank among the most ancient institutions of the earth: And it is equally obvious that all, and even the most polished nations of antiquity, were addicted to the barbarous custom of offering human sacrifices, to appease the wrath, or obtain the favor of the gods which were commonly worshipped among them. But in the institutions which were urged by Moses, no such offerings were encouraged, or even allowed. This simple fact, of itself, proves that the condition of human society was greatly meliorated and improved by the introduction of the Mosaic dispensation: So that in the very outset of the comparison, we see that a vast improvement was secured by the introduction of revealed religion.

Among the Egyptians, the astonishing number of 666 sacrifices of different kinds were ordained to be offered: but among the Israelites, a few, and only a few objects were selected for this ancient service.

The laws which were originated and enforced by human wisdom could only take cognizance of the actions of men ; while the divine law took cognizance of the thoughts and intentions of the heart : For it commands, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. To keep the commandments of the Lord, and the statutes which I command thee this day for thy good." Deut. v. 6. xi. 12. These few examples show the superiority of the divine laws, over those of all human legislators, in that they apply their authority to the temper of the mind or soul, and claim a sacred influence over the hearts and affections of their subjects.

They forbid injustice, theft and covetousness, and require the duties of justice, honesty, faithfulness and truth, in all our intercourse with human society; and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

The Jewish law, for its liberality to slaves, holds a pre-eminent rank among all the institutions of ancient, or even modern times, where slavery has been permitted: And were this law now observed among civilized nations, most of the horrors of slavery would soon be annihilated: For in case the master used or employed any such cruelty or severity as to deprive a slave of any of the principal members of his body, or even of a tooth, he forfeited all the right he before held in him; and the slave, so treated, was henceforth free from his master.—The chastity of female slaves was carefully guarded by the same law, so that any violence of her master was a total forfeiture of his right to her services, and her freedom was instantly restored.

Could we review all the laws of ancient nations, we should find nothing in them to equal the humanity and tenderness which is prescribed by the Jewish

statute, for the poor, for widows, for orphans, and for slaves. The laws of almost every ancient nation abandoned slaves of both sexes to the lust and brutality of their masters. At Lacedemon, slaves were treated with the most inhuman barbarity, and could claim no protection from the laws. If a slave possessed a noble or elegant figure, and thus wore an appearance above his condition, he was condemned to die: Add to this, his master was fined, that he might feel the necessity of exercising such severity upon his other slaves as to prevent them from offending the eyes of the citizens by the beauty or accomplishments of their persons.

The Spartans were authorized by their laws to fall upon the Helots, while they were laboring in the fields, and massacre the ablest men amongst them: And this they did for mere exercise, and to prevent too great an increase of slaves! This was one of the laws of *Lycurgus*, so famous in the annals of Greece, for his moderation, wisdom and philosophy!

But Rome, still more barbarous, looked calmly on and beheld her opulent men slaughter their slaves, without the shadow of any cause for complaint against them. This they did, for the purpose of supplying their fish ponds with human flesh, "to make their lampreys more delicious by such nourishment!" An able writer\* well observes, that "Even under the eyes of the magistrates, thousands of these unhappy creatures expired in the ampitheatre, for the amusement of a fierce and cruel people; and some festival days caused more human blood to flow in the empire, than many days of battle."

Whoever has read the writings of Anacreon and Horace, has seen to what abominable excesses of incontinence and cruelty, both the Greeks and Romans were addicted. Their cruelty seems to be nearly without bounds: Yea, and it almost curdles the crimson flood, in the heart of sensibility, to read

\* David Levi, from whose defence of the Old Testament these facts are borrowed.

the Roman laws respecting slaves. By these laws they are compared to beasts of burden, and are exposed to the most cruel tortures. Did the master of a family happen to be assassinated, every slave beneath the same roof, and all others within such a distance as the human voice might be supposed capable of reaching, were condemned to death without distinction.

As might well be expected, the inevitable consequence of such cruel and barbarous institutions, was a most deplorable state of morals. Ambition and violence agitated states and kingdoms, while every pollution and nameless vice, spread moral desolation and darkness over the fairest portions of the globe.

In the view which has been taken of human society *without* a revelation, we have carefully avoided to notice all those countries, from whose inhabitants the light of science and philosophy have withheld their aid, and who have been for ages sunk in the grossest ignorance and barbarism ; and treated only of the most polite, polished, scientific and enlightened nations in all the heathen world ; where the most refined systems of philosophy have exerted their utmost influence to improve the condition of empires, kingdoms and states. And we have seen, that even these countries, of boasted science and reason, were polluted with every species of vice and cruelty, which degrade the character of man : that these abominations were not the mere outrages of a lawless banditti, but the common and lawful customs of the most refined nations ; sanctioned and approved by the civil institutions of the wisest legislators of the whole pagan world.

And I now beg leave to address the plain and important question to your understandings—was not the condition of the human race, so truly unpropitious and deplorable ; so unrefined and sinful, as obviously to stand in need of the light of revelation ? Whatever may be the convictions of interested skept-

tics, or the proud pretensions of boasting philosophers, *Socrates*, one of the wisest, best, and most renowned philosophers of antiquity, not only acknowledged his conviction of the necessity of a revelation, for the improvement and reformation of mankind, but expresses his firm belief that such a divine communication would be made to the world.

In expressing his views of what could alone effect a reformation of the moral condition of mankind, he says, as Plato has told us, "that it is necessary to wait till such a personage shall appear to teach them how they ought to conduct themselves, both towards God and towards man." He then proceeds to exclaim with great fervor—"O when shall that period arrive! And who shall be that teacher?—How ardently do I desire to see this man, who he is!"\* In expressing his views and anticipations of this illustrious personage, he says that "this Legislator must be of higher than human extraction; for that as beasts are governed by men, so must man be guided by a nature superior to his own."† And how admirably does this representation compare with the character of the glorious Founder of Christianity!

Look, but for a moment, upon the state of society before the revelation of the gospel. What was it? The whole gentile or heathen world was enveloped in darkness and involved in crime! Cruelty, and rapine, and murder, stalked abroad in open day, emboldened and sanctioned by the laws of the most civilized nations! Debauchery and lewdness, so far from being viewed as criminal, were enrolled among the most worthy and acceptable acts of devotion! The worst propensities of human nature were tolerated and applauded, as commendable virtues!

Amidst all this degeneracy and human degradation; through all this gloom and darkness, which the light of nature, reason and philosophy, had in vain labored for ages to remove, the glorious "*sun*

\*Alcibiad. II. de Precat.

†De Leg. lib. 4.

*of righteousness arises !”* Repentance and reformation is demanded in the name of the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, predicated upon the condescension, the mercy and forgiving love of God ; the beauty and excellence of moral virtue ; and powerfully supported by the righteous retributions of “the Judge of quick and dead !”

The illustrious Founder of Christianity boldly condemns the degeneracy of the Jew, and the base and grovelling idolatry of the Greek : and in firm defiance of all the armies of human passions, prejudices, and customs, he lays the axe of divine truth at the root of every evil tree, without the least regard to distinctions of rank or fortune, and exposes the horrid enormity of wickedness, in all its alluring forms !

From the lowest occupations in life, he selects his instruments to oppose the pride of learning and philosophy, and employs the weakest and humblest of men, to contend against the rulers of the darkness of this world ! He triumphs over all the deep-laid schemes of his adversaries, and his wisdom and benevolence obtains a speedy conquest over the hearts of bold and impenitent sinners ! Thousands flock to hear his instructive sermons—the power of God is displayed—the deaf are made to hear, the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, the lepers are cleansed, and the dead are quickened into life ! He professes to be commissioned from God, whose power he displays, and patiently yields up his life as the seal of his testimony.

His followers mourn the sad reversion of their prospects, and their hearts are discouraged. But hark ! the tomb’s strong dreary cavern first witnesses the triumphant glory of resurrection power, and the countenances of his desponding followers brighten with joy and gladness ! They hasten to bear the news of his resurrection, and to proclaim his doctrine to the benighted tribes of Jacob, and the idolatrous nations of the heathen world ! And now mark the astonishing effect which it produces



throughout the land of Palestine, and the wide-spread empire of the Romans.

As the influences of christianity began to be felt the most salutary laws began to be instituted, corresponding with the pure system of morals, which were inculcated and enforced by the sanctions of revealed religion. Polygamy and divorce, the two worst banes of social confidence, and of connubial peace and prosperity, soon began to fall into disgrace, and in a short time, almost totally disappeared. The lives of children, which before were subject to the will and caprice of unfeeling parents, were now guarded by the most wholesome laws. The dreadful horrors of slavery were softened, and gradually removed from the empire. The savage ferocity of men was exchanged for the spirit of mildness, meekness and peace; while a laudable subordination to the civil institutions of the land, marked the peaceable demeanor of thousands who had felt the benign spirit and influence of revealed truth.

Centuries had passed away, the arts and sciences had enjoyed a constant and progressive improvement, philosophy had unveiled her splendors, and human wisdom had brought forth its richest stores to improve the condition of the world; but still, moral darkness, with all its frightful train of detestable vices and sufferings, triumphed over the noblest works of the Creator, and sunk them in barbarous ignorance and the grossest superstition and impurity. The reason was, the designs of infinite wisdom and love, were neither written upon the sunbeam, inscribed upon the azure vault of heaven, or so plainly impressed upon the pages of providence as to enable the sapient eye of philosophy to decipher the doctrine of pardon and grace, the future destiny of man, or the glorious hope of immortality by a resurrection from the dead.

When these glorious truths were unfolded by the light of christian revelation, and man was brought

to see that his duty and his happiness consisted in imitating the God of boundless compassion and grace, he felt the force of his obligation to love and forgive his enemies, and to employ his best exertions for the instruction and reformation of mankind. This could only be done by refining and elevating his conceptions of the Supreme Being, and calling forth the hopes of future happy existence. No system had ever exerted, nor could exert this happy influence, but the system of revealed religion. Wherever this prevailed, civilization and moral refinement progressed with a rapidity and power, unknown before in all the annals of the world: And I may add; from its instructive pages, the invaluable charters of civil and religious rights have been drawn by all the civilized nations of the globe.

Permit me then to ask the most fastidious in the school of skepticism, did not the condition of man imperatively demand the light of revelation for his improvement and reformation in government and morals?

## LECTURE IV.

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Exodus iii. 11.

"And Moses said unto God, Who *am* I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

In my former labours, I have presented you with a brief, but faithful picture of the general depravity of manners which prevailed for a long succession of ages throughout the heathen world. The catalogue of their enormities and vices, were they all brought together, which are registered on the pages of history, would swell into a ponderous volume, over which the benevolence and refinements of the present age would be charitably inclined to draw an impenetrable veil. Enough however has been brought to view, to show that no means which were employed for centuries were found to be of sufficient influence to diminish the aggregate of human guilt and of human wretchedness.

An unanswerable argument for the support of this conclusion is found in the clear and obvious truth, that during these long periods of general ignorance and crime, men reasoned on almost every other subject, save those which were connected with religion, with an acuteness and power, which clearly denote the manly growth and maturity of intellectual strength.

I have shown that during these periods of degeneracy, the arts and sciences were on the march of improvement, that learning displayed its charms, and that philosophy opened her richest stores for the intellectual repast of man: And yet, for all their power and influence, vices the most shocking to human nature were openly practiced amidst the most refined circles, and tolerated by the laws of the wisest legislators! Nay more—they were taught

and enforced, and eulogized, as the most acceptable acts of devotion and piety to the gods!

These facts render the conviction irresistible, that some superior influence was necessary to effect a reformation in the moral condition, the laws, manners and habits of human society. And it is in vain for any man to attempt to deceive us by assertions, that reason and philosophy were sufficient to effect this moral change; for if this were true, why did they not accomplish so desirable an object, during the protracted period of more than *two thousand years*, in which they exerted their power throughout the Grecian and Roman states? The state of society, however, is vastly improved, in every country where the scriptures have been received and accredited: Nor can this salutary change be traced to any other assignable cause; than that of the influence of revealed religion. The conclusion is therefore unavoidable, from this glaring contrast, that a revelation from God was absolutely necessary to produce this astonishing improvement.

It is barely possible that the facts and arguments which I have employed to show the insufficiency of reason and philosophy to reform the errors of mankind, correct the abuses of power, improve the moral condition of the world, and advance the refinement and happiness of human society, may have been mistaken by some superficial minds, for a total abandonment and rejection of these invaluable aids, in the acquisition of all that is ennobling and happyfying to man. Should this be the case with any who have given me a hearing, I beg leave here to correct the error. So far from abandoning the aid of reason, I have *appealed* to your reason to judge and decide, from the facts which I have laid before you, upon the necessity of a revelation from God, by contrasting the condition of man, *with*, and *without*, the light of revelation. It is by the assistance of this precious gift, that we are qualified to judge of the merits of what claims to *be* revelation. And if

I were disposed to condemn reason, think ye that I would appeal to your understandings, with a view to convince you that God has made a revelation of his mind and will to man? The very thought is pregnant with the grossest absurdity. It is the gift of reason which qualifies us to profit by the sublime instructions which revelation brings to man.— Without it, a revelation might as well have been addressed to brute beasts or even to stalks and stones. Think not then that we discard reason, when we assign to it its only proper place in the great system of divine truth: Nor presume to esteem it the less valuable because it was not designed to unlock the counsels of eternity, nor judge of the secrets of God before they were revealed: For reason was never designed to be the *revealer*, but the *receiver* of divine truth. Nor are we the enemies of philosophy, because we are the friends of revelation. We prize its aid, and delight to explore its extended fields. We view it as the servant and handmaid of religion, and draw upon its ample stores for all the purposes of demonstration in the science of moral truth: But we dare not pay an atheistical homage to this great mental accomplishment, by exalting it to an equality with the adorable fountain of wisdom and truth. The exclusive pretensions of our opposers, therefore, to this distinguishing excellence, in the departments of science, is a most arrogant assumption, clearly attested by the splendid monuments of mental and scientific attainment, reared through the whole history of christian literature. And may I not safely add, that skeptics of the present day, are indebted to christian philosophers for the noblest achievements of which the science itself can boast? Do not the names of Watts, Paley, Newton, Locke, Reid, and Stewart, stand unrivalled in the annals of literary fame? Then let skepticism blush and hide her head, when she charges the friends of revelation with being the enemies of philosophy.

The question being settled which relates to the necessity of a revelation, for the civil, political and moral improvement of mankind ; it cannot be denied, that an all-wise and benevolent Being should reasonably be expected to afford such a revelation of his mind and will as the condition of his creatures might require. And it is perfectly plain to every historian, that unless the Bible do contain such a revelation, no revelation has ever been made. But the Scriptures of the Old and New-Testaments claim that honor, and fearlessly challenge investigation. As this book professes to contain the elements of genuine history, as well as the great truths of revelation, we shall now invite your attention to the credibility of the Mosaic history.

It cannot, with the shadow of reason, be denied, that the Jews are a people of great antiquity, and that they have, with the utmost zeal and diligence, preserved their customs and religious rites from a period of remote antiquity. It is true that in the first century of the christian era, some ignorant and uninformed zealots among the Greek writers, denied the antiquity of their origin, because they were not mentioned by certain Greek historians who had gone before them. But the same is true with regard to the Romans : for notwithstanding they had long existed as a war-like and powerful people, yet they are never mentioned by Herodotus, Thucydides, nor any of their cotemporaries. The reason why the Jews were so little known by many nations, was owing to their inhabiting an inland country, and devoting themselves almost exclusively to the business of agriculture. It is easy, however, to show, that they were not so secluded as to be passed unnoticed by the most ancient nations, nor even by the best Greek historians. The more ancient nations whose writers have made mention of the Jews, are the Egyptians, Phœnicians, Tyrians and Chaldeans. Of their antiquity and authority, no suspic-

ion can be entertained, unless we discard the voice of history altogether.

Manetho, the Egyptian historian, is alleged by Josephus to have mentioned their departure, with their families and effects, out of Egypt, and their settlement in Jerusalem in the land of Judea. And notwithstanding this historian is supposed to have blended much fable with his narrative of facts, yet the description which he gives of them as *shepherds*, renders it a credible conclusion that the ancient Israelites were intended to be described.

Justin, a Latin historian, who abridged the universal history of Trogius Pompeius, which was written about half a century before the birth of Christ, speaks of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, but assigns a different cause for their exodus. This, however, does not invalidate, but is evidence of the fact, that in the days of this historian, the account of the departure of the children of Israel, under the conduct of Moses, was a truth universally acknowledged. Trogius Pompeius asserts "that the magicians caused Moses and the Israelites to be expelled, because *they themselves* were afflicted with a kind of murrain or leprosy, and were afraid" that the disease would become general. To this measure they pretended to have been directed by an oracle. This seems plainly to allude to the plague of biles, with which the Egyptians were smitten; and therefore, directly corroborates the Mosaic history of that signal judgment upon the cruel and oppressive Egyptians.

Tacitus, the Roman historian, tells us that the Jews were expelled from Egypt, on account of their having the leprosy. Now these testimonies show that Moses and the Israelites were, for some cause or other, hurried out of the land of Egypt. Thus history, both sacred and profane, confirms the fact, that the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt, and that they suddenly left that country in the days of Moses. Two causes are here assigned for their sud-

den departure from the land of their oppression ; the one by Moses, and the other by heathen historians. And *first*, the hand or power of God, visibly displayed for their deliverance ; and *secondly*, the fear of the Egyptians, lest the leprosy should be communicated to their own people by the Israelites. But the latter cause assigned was impossible and absurd, for this plain reason—It is a well-known fact, that the leprosy was a distemper common to the Egyptians, and is therefore called the *disease of Egypt*, by the Hebrew legislator. And is there the least shadow of consistency in supposing that the Egyptians would expel the Israelites from their country on account of a distemper which was common to the climate, and to which they had always been subjected? If such a conclusion then be inadmissible, to what assignable cause can their exodus be traced, but to that which is recorded in the writings of Moses ?

In addition to these evidences, the most ancient historians agree that there were from two to six HUNDRED THOUSAND of the Israelites which left Egypt in the days, and under the conduct of Moses. *Numerius*, a Pythagorian philosopher, informs his readers that Jannas and Jambres were employed by the Egyptians to oppose the efforts and prayers of Moses and to hinder the effects of his miracles, which had brought down so many and grievous plagues upon Egypt, about the time that the Jews were banished from that country: and reference is made by a writer of the New Testament to the same fact. 2d Tim. iii. 8.

The Phœnician records, as preserved by the Tyrians, mention the friendly intercourse between Solomon, king of Israel, and Hiram, king of Tyre, and tell us that Solomon built the Temple of Jerusalem : Although this fact does not directly concern the Mosaic history, yet it is thought proper to give it a place, as we pass along, since it is an important evidence of the existence of the Jewish nation, more than a thousand years before the birth of Christ ;



and at that remote period, nothing can be more obvious than the fact that the Mosaic records were not only received and credited, but universally acknowledged as of divine authority.

The Phœnician historian, Menander, the Ephesian, who recorded the acts of the Greeks and barbarians, under all the Tyrian kings, also mentions the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, in the 12th year of the reign of Hiram.

*Berosus*, the Chaldean historian, not only mentions many of the most wonderful events which are recorded by Moses, such as the deluge, the ark, and the re peopling of the post-deluvian world ; but he mentions the Jews, in particular, and their captivity in Babylon.

*Cherilus*, an ancient Greek poet, mentions the Jews, as constituting a part of the army of Xerxes, in his expedition against Greece, and describes them as speaking the Phœnician tongue, (which, according to Josephus, they did speak,) and tells his readers that they came from the Solymian mountains, which were in Judea, near a broad lake; which could be none other than the lake *Asphaltitis*, so famous in biblical history.

Pythagoras is represented by his biographer, Her-mippus, to have acknowledged the doctrines of the Jews ; and it is believed from good evidence, that he incorporated many of their laws into his philosophy.

Hecateus, of Abdera, who was contemporary with Alexander the Great, while this prince was a youth, composed one entire book concerning the Jews, embracing a valuable but brief history of their country, their laws, their antiquity, their customs, their religious rites, their sufferings and persecutions for their constancy and unbending perseverance in defence of the religion and laws, which had been handed down to them from remote antiquity. Indeed, his writings, although a heathen historian, so clearly confirm the antiquity of the Jews and their relig-

ion, that the most important facts concerning them, seem to be placed beyond a reasonable doubt. The facts which I have noticed, are principally embraced by Josephus, in his first book against Appian, and may also be found in the *first* volume of Bishop Watson's *Theological Collections*.

Numerous other testimonies might be mentioned, were it not, that their introduction would be an unnecessary trespass upon your patience. I will therefore only add; that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, is a fact which has obtained the *consent of all nations*. The learned *Huetius* fairly arrives at this conclusion, that all religions have borrowed their theology from the writings of Moses; whose history they have altered and corrupted, so as to accommodate the fabulous accounts with which they have amused and deluded their credulous and superstitious subjects. That all the fabulous deities of the ancients were indebted for their origin to gross misapprehensions and corruptions of the important truths which the five books of Moses contain. This truth is obvious from the consent of the most ancient authors of which we have any account. For several of them have taken entire passages from his books; particularly Sanchoniathan, Homer, Hesiod, Thales, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Socrates and Plato; while Manetho, Philochorus, Eupolemus, and several others of the ancient writers, explicitly declare that Moses was the *lawgiver* of the Jews and the *founder* of their religion; and not a few of them treat distinctly of his laws! Nay, even Porphyry, and Julian, the apostate, *acknowledged* that the five first books of scripture, which are attributed to Moses, were written by him! These facts are gathered from Du Pin's *first* volume of ecclesiastical history, the *first* volume of his scripture Canon, the *first* book of Grotius, and the *first* volume of Jenkins' Christianity.

It may therefore be asserted, without the fear of contradiction, that no historian whose writings have

come down to our times, stands supported by such a respectable number of witnesses, as does the celebrated lawgiver of the Jews. And I here ask ; is there a single historian, either ancient or modern, who has denied the fact that Moses wrote the history which is ascribed to him ? This will not, it cannot be pretended, with the least colouring of truth. The history of Moses, therefore, stands upon an immoveable foundation, against which all the storms of skepticism must rage, and for ever rage in vain. And every man of sober and candid reflection, cannot but view it as the madness of delirium, to suppose that a numerous and intelligent nation, like the Jews, consisting of *many hundred thousands*, could be duped by the grossest imposture and wickedness, be led by the force of pretended miracles, performed in open day ; miracles on which their very existence depended, and continued to hang, for forty years, if these pretensions were all a cheat, and destitute of divine reality for their support. Whoever can arrive at such a stupid and absurd conclusion, must think himself a paragon of wisdom, and that the Jews were a nation of the most consummate blockheads that ever disgraced the earth !

The history which this highly favored and celebrated prophet has left for the instruction of the generations that were destined to follow him, is evidently the most ancient of all that have been presented to the world, as well as the most interesting for the facts which it contains, and the variety of the subjects which it embraces. It carries us back to a period when "the earth was without form and void" of inhabitants, and acquaints us with the origin of our existence. It makes us acquainted with the character and manners of the ante-deluvian ages, and recounts the most astonishing changes which have transpired since the morning of creation.

It displays in a plain and simple succession, the order of the most ancient generations, and contains the only account with which the inhabitants of this

world have ever been furnished, of the creation, which wears the appearance of probability; inasmuch as it traces the origin of all things to the will and power of God. It accounts for the introduction of moral evil in a manner perfectly consistent with the dictates of reason, if we but keep in remembrance the universal custom which prevailed among the ancients, of clothing their descriptive narrations in highly figurative language. Were it not incompatible with the design of this discourse, the credibility of the Mosaic history could easily be demonstrated by the evidences of his prophetic inspiration; But this is designed to form the subject of a future lecture.

We will now leave out the question of his inspiration, and show that Moses might be qualified to furnish the brief history of the ante-deluvian world, and the intervening ages from that general catastrophe to his own times, which his writings contain, by means of oral tradition, which was the earliest and only method, (aside from revelation,) of handing down the knowledge of important events, from the creation of the world to the period of the invention of letters. In doing this, however, let it be distinctly understood, that we inflexibly maintain the inspiration of this venerable prophet of God.

The longevity of man, before the flood, certainly was most favorable to this mode of conveying truths which were deemed of the most importance to preserve: And it is not unreasonable to suppose that the first of human beings should have some knowledge of their origin, and the elevated rank which they held in the scale of being. From the chronology of the Mosaic history, it is easy to discover how these truths could be communicated from age to age, without exceeding the bounds of reasonable probability.

According to the Mosaic chronology, Methuselah lived two hundred and forty-three years with Adam, and about ninety-seven years with Shem, the

son of Noah: So that all the important events which transpired before the flood had only to pass through one person, to a period long after the general deluge. Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, which went with him into Egypt, lived with Shem fifty years: So that only *three* persons, Methuselah, Shem, and Jacob, were necessary to communicate this knowledge from the days of Adam down to the time when the children of Israel went to dwell in the land of Goshen; through a period of two thousand two hundred and thirty-eight years. Nor is it more difficult to perceive how Moses might come into possession of these facts: for his grand-father, Amram, lived a considerable time with Joseph, the son of Jacob, and also with Moses, the author of the history in question. So that only *two* persons, Joseph and Amram, were necessary to communicate the same knowledge from Jacob to Moses—making in the whole, but *six* persons, through whom this intelligence would have to pass, from Adam to Moses.

The general corruption, however, which soon prevailed throughout the earth, by the introduction and practice of idolatry; together with the fact, that the life of man became shortened, were causes which rendered oral tradition an unsafe medium for conveying any important information from generation to generation. Hence it became necessary to commit to writing all the important truths of history, as well as a revelation of the mind and will of God, that they might be preserved in their purity for the instruction of future ages.

In this discourse I have confined my remarks to a few particulars, as leading traits in the character of the Mosaic history, and have found them supported by the testimony of the most ancient historians among the heathen. Indeed, they have, in all ages of the world, been so well attested as to be acknowledged by all the ancient nations, who have ever been represented to the world by a respectable historian of their own.

But as modern skepticism affects to deny and abuse the Mosaic history, we now demand, what evidence has it ever produced to prove this history false?—We answer, without the fear of contradiction, not a particle of evidence has it ever produced to invalidate the truth of this history, nor can any such evidence be obtained, from any of the authentic records of ancient or modern lore. The voice of history refutes their cavils and condemns their unbelief; while it yields an assent to the truth of these ancient and venerable records.

These facts show with great clearness that the Mosaic history is the only rational account of the creation, and the original state of mankind, which has ever been presented to the world.

The supposition that Moses could palm a fiction of his own upon the Jewish nation, as the authentic history of themselves and their ancestors, is without a parallel for absurdity, in all the annals of ignorance, superstition, credulity, and fanatical madness. And I greatly marvel that a rational being can be found, to deny the authenticity of a record so clear, and so amply attested.

And I trust, that all those who are disposed to attend to the evidences which have been adduced, and which still remain to be set before them, will be fully confirmed in the belief of their faithfulness, as well as of their importance in the history of the human race.

## LECTURE V.

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ST. LUKE xvii. 27.

"They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark : and the flood came and destroyed them all."

It is not so surprising that the voice of Noah's prophecy should have been disregarded by the antediluvian world, as that the more modern and enlightened ages should be affected with the mania of unbending infidelity. For it cannot be made fully to appear that rain had ever fallen upon the then inhabited part of the globe. We only read, before this eventful catastrophe, that "there came up a mist and watered the face of the ground."

Those to whom this prophet and preacher of righteousness addressed the unwelcome intelligence of an approaching deluge, no doubt considered and treated his message as the idle dream of an extravagant enthusiast. And although he continued to raise his warning voice, for the space of one hundred and twenty years, it does not appear to have produced any salutary effect beyond the limits of his own household. It would rather seem that his preaching, and preparation for the approaching flood, was a subject of merriment and jest, instead of sober reflection and repentance for sin. For we are plainly certified by our text, that "they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark:" and were unconscious of danger, until the flood, with resistless fury, burst upon them and swept them all away.

The event of which we are now called to treat, stands without a parallel for its magnitude and importance, in the annals of the ancient world. We cannot contemplate without emotions of pity and

regret, the ruins of splendid kingdoms and empires, the sad memorials of whose greatness are now crumbling into decay, nor pass over the broken triumphal arch, that once extended itself over the powerful senate of Rome, without dropping the tear of sensibility, or perceiving that the hand of time has inscribed upon her prostrate pillars, her mouldering temples, her ancient grandeur, and upon all her earthly majesty, the mournful, but faithful motto—"Thy glory is departed," and the sun of thy splendor is set to rise no more! But what are all the ruins and desolations of the most splendid cities or empires of the earth, when compared with the awful catastrophe which involved the ruin of a world! They sink into insignificance, and are utterly unworthy of the comparison.

As awful, magnificent, and sublime, as this tremendous overthrow of a sinful world must appear, to the serious, reflecting mind, unbelievers scoff at the very mention of the fact, and treat it as the dream of enthusiasts! It therefore devolves on me to show that the history of the deluge is not only related with the plainest simplicity by the Hebrew lawgiver, but that his narration is supported by the concurrent testimony of all the most ancient nations, whose records and traditions have been preserved and handed down to the present age.

When we reflect that Moses penned the history of the deluge about fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, and delivered his writings into the hands of his countrymen, with a solemn injunction that they should be read in their public assemblies, upon every returning Sabbath; it would indeed appear to be an evidence of the most astonishing stupidity, that a whole nation should be led at once to give their unqualified assent to his narration, if it were nothing more than a mere fable, or a sublime fiction, which had its origin in the fertility of the brilliant imagination of their leader. Our reason forces us to the conclusion, that had not the story



of the flood been the subject of oral tradition, the multitude would have been led to express their doubts, and to demand some further evidence of the fact: But instead of calling in question the truth of this narrative, it appears that the fact was universally acknowledged; and that they were able to trace their ancestors directly up to the very family which had been so miraculously preserved from that general ruin by which the world was overthrown. Nor do we find, in all the records of antiquity, that the Jews, or any of the ancient nations, called in question the important fact under consideration. If it were not, therefore, a truth on which the utmost reliance was placed, in all former ages, why have not their objections and their doubts been transmitted by the page of history to our times, as well as the record of a thousand circumstances and facts which are of infinitely less importance to the world? But history and the most ancient traditions, both unite in lending their support to the account with which we are furnished by the writings of Moses, of an universal deluge.

The testimony of historians is so ample upon this subject, that I shall only select a few of the most plain and pointed, to show that the fact of which we are treating is supported by the concurrent testimony of the most ancient nations.

I have had occasion already to remark, that at an early period after the flood, idolatry became the prevailing custom of the post-deluvian world. And it is natural to suppose that so distinguished a personage as Noah, would be found among the earliest objects of their religious veneration. That a kind of religious homage was paid to this venerable patriarch and friend of God, may be clearly seen by consulting the statements of the ingenious Mr. Bryant, which are inserted in the Encyclopedia, upon the subject of the deluge. According to this mythologist, the illustrious individual who was preserved in the ark, was signified by different names, among all

the most ancient nations, whose history or traditions have come down to the present generation. Indeed, antiquity abounds with testimony relating to the deluge; and it is a position capable of being clearly maintained, that the heathen mythology sprang from the ancient traditions of this wonderful event.

The ingenious writer which has been mentioned, shows with great clearness, that Prometheus, Deucalion, Osiris, Inachus, Atlas, Zuth, Xuthus, Theuth, Dagon, and many other names, celebrated in heathen mythology, were merely names, by which Noah, the patriarch and father of the new world, emerging from the flood, was intended; And it ought to be distinctly borne in remembrance that the traditions of a general deluge are not peculiar to ancient heathen writers, but abound in India; are found in the distant Islands of the Pacific ocean, and are familiar to the aborigines of our own continent. We have time, however, only to notice a few of the many accounts with which we are furnished in relation to this subject.

From the history of Chaldea and Assyria, written by Abydenus, of which only a few fragments have been preserved by Eusebius, the following remarkable passage in relation to our general subject, has been handed down to us. In speaking of several ante-deluvian monarchs, he adds—"After these reigned many others, and then Seisithrus; to whom Saturn foretold, that there should fall a prodigious flood of rain on the fifteenth day of the month Desius; and commanded him to deposit all his writings in Heliopolis, a city of the Sipparians. Having obeyed this injunction, Seisithrus, without delay, sailed into Armenia, and found the prediction of the god realized. On the third day, after the waters were abated, he sent out birds, that he might ascertain whether the earth had yet appeared through the flood. But these, finding only a boundless sea, and having no resting place, returned to Seisithrus.

In the same manner did others. And again he sent the third time: for they had returned to him, having their wings polluted with mud. Then the gods translated him from among men; and his ship came into Armenia, the wood of which is there used as a charm." He also adds a remark, when treating of the sagacity of animals, by which he evidently refers to the dove that Noah sent from the ark: for he says, "Deucalion's dove, sent from the ark, upon her return, brought a sure indication that the tempests had yielded to tranquility."

No man, I think, possessing common discernment, can read this simple fragment of ancient heathen history, without being struck with the great similarity which it bears to the account of Noah and his ark; nor does it appear possible for any man to avoid seeing that it is in substance the history of the same facts that are recorded by Moses.

Josephus, in his first book against Appian, quotes the same facts from Berosus, another Chaldean historian: for he says—"This Berosus, treading in the steps of the most ancient writers, has recorded the same facts as Moses, in relation to the deluge—the destruction of mankind by it—the ark in which Noah, the father of our race, was preserved—and its resting on the tops of the Armenian mountains." To this general account, Josephus tells us that Berosus adds—"It is reported that part of the ship now remains in Armenia, on the Gordyaeon mountains (the same that is called Ararat by Moses) and that some bring thence pitch, which they use as a charm."

Lucian, a famous writer among the Greeks, (in the reign of Marcus Aurelius) gives the account of a very ancient history of the ark, which he says was laid up in Hieraopolis of Syria; and he tells us that the Greeks gave the following account of the deluge: "That the first race of men were self-willed, perpetrating many crimes, regardless of oaths, inhospitable, uncharitable; for which cause great calamities

fell upon them. For suddenly the earth threw out much water ; a deluge of rain fell from heaven ; rivers overflowed exceedingly ; and the sea itself overspread the globe to that degree, that all things were overwhelmed by the water, and the whole of mankind perished. Deucalion alone remained, the source of another generation, on account of his prudence and piety. He was preserved thus : In a great ark, which he had prepared, he placed his wives and his children, and entered also himself. After them went in bears, and horses, and lions, and serpents, and all other living creatures upon the face of the earth, by pairs. He received all these animals, which had no power to injure him, but were exceedingly familiar, being overruled by divine influence. These all floated together, in the same ark, so long as the waters were upon the earth." And here allow me to remark, that the learned Grotius has informed us, that the names "Seisithrus, Ogyges and Deucalion, are all names, signifying in other languages, the same as Noah does in the Hebrew, the language in which Moses wrote."

This fact, therefore, shows us that the various names which have been employed by different nations, in their narratives of the deluge, were designed to signify the same identical person, and that illustrious individual was Noah.

Diodorus Siculus informs us that the Egyptians have a tradition, that "Deucalion's was the universal deluge." Mr. Bryant, the ingenious author which we have had occasion to mention before, affirms that the Osiris of the Egyptians, was a name applied to Ham, and frequently to Noah. Plato declares "that a certain Eyyptian priest related to Solon, out of their sacred books, the history of the universal deluge ; which took place long before the partial inundations known to the Grecians." The Chinese have a tradition, that "Puoneu, (*their Noah*,) with his family, escaped the general deluge," and was the favored instrument by which the world was repopled,

after the universal destruction of its inhabitants by water. Plutarch tells us, that "Osiris went into the ark, on the seventeenth of Athyr," which was the second month after the autumnal equinox ; the very day fixed by Moses, for the commencement of the deluge.

These facts so powerfully and plainly corroborate the history of Moses, that the most ordinary reader can discover, through the records of the most ancient nations, such evident traces of an universal deluge, as to remove all doubt upon the subject, so far as the fact is concerned, unless he is disposed to shut out all the light of history upon an event so important in the annals of the ancient world.

Should any farther evidence be required to place this fact in a still stronger light, such evidence may be found in the histories and traditions of almost every part of the globe. "Sir William Jones, by whom a society for the advancement of Asiatic literature has been instituted at Calcutta, has discovered that in the oldest mythological books of that country, there is such an account of the deluge as corresponds sufficiently with that of Moses." In addition to these, the Persians have preserved such traditions of the flood, as to remove all reasonable doubt that it has long been believed among them. To the ancient inhabitants of the Island of Cuba, the history, or rather tradition, of the creation and the flood, appears to have been familiar. For, Herrera informs us that these natives were in possession of the facts, that the world was created by a superior intelligence, and asserted that they had considerable information concerning the flood : they had a tradition that the world was once destroyed by water ; and "that an old man, knowing the deluge was to come, built a great ship, and went into it with his family and abundance of animals : that he sent out a crow, which did not at first return, staying to feed on the carcasses of dead animals, but afterwards came back with a green branch." They also retained a

tradition, answering to the account of Noah's two sons covering him while in a state of inebriation, and the scoffings of the third.

The Mexicans, we are told in Casta's history of the Indies, "make particular mention of a deluge in their country, by which *all men* were drowned."—By Nieuhoff's voyage to Brazil, "we are informed, that the most barbarous of the Brazilians, inhabiting the inland countries, though they scarcely knew any thing of religion, or an Almighty Being; they have some knowledge remaining of a general deluge: it being their opinion that the whole race of mankind were extirpated by a general deluge, except one man and his sister."

The Peruvians, according to the author of the history of the Indies, asserted that they had received by tradition from their ancestors, that long before there were any kings among their forefathers, "when the country was very populous, there happened a great flood: the sea breaking out beyond its bounds, so that the land was covered with water, and all the people perished." Other natives of the American continent have recited the same tradition, and affirm, that the whole race of man was then destroyed "except six persons (the precise number of Noah's family) being saved in a float, from whom all the inhabitants of the country descended."

It would be easy to multiply examples in confirmation of the truth which we have asserted, that the fact of the general deluge was confirmed by the concurrent testimony of the most ancient nations, and the traditions of the most rude and uncultivated wanderers of the forest: Enough, however, has been produced to place the subject beyond dispute.

The history which is given by Moses, of this terrific overthrow of a sinful world, is evidently the most ancient of any that has ever been preserved, and might, therefore, be expected to contain a more full and perfect account of that memorable event than any other now extant: And to all such as have

examined this subject with attention, it must be obvious, that the account which Moses furnishes is the most full, simple and consistent, that has ever been submitted for rational inspection.

The probability of such an event as the deluge, is strengthened and confirmed by appearances, which admit of no other satisfactory solution: I mean the vast quantities of marine substances, found in every country, upon the highest mountains, at all distances from the sea, and to considerable depths below the surface of the earth. These must either have been tossed by the violence of earthquakes from the bed of the sea, to their present deposits, or have been formed during the long period which the waters of the flood remained upon the earth. But the supposition, that it was the effect of earthquakes, is totally inadmissable, since they are found upon the highest mountains, and at the greatest distances from the ocean. The only conclusion, therefore, which will bear the scrutiny of reason, is, that they were formed during the period in which the earth was overflowed, in the days of Noah.

A method which has sometimes been employed to account for these extensive fragments of marine production, by supposing that they might have been left by those gradual recedings of the ocean from some parts of the earth, which have been recorded by historians; is, to say the least of it, extremely improbable, if not impossible. For all the changes effected by the cause here urged, which historians have noticed, or tradition has handed down from the remotest antiquity, will bear no comparison with the effects which are too obvious for denial, in every part of the globe, of marine substances, which must have been left behind, when the waters of the deluge retreated. Indeed, the hypothesis we are considering, appears to be so wild and extravagant, that we can see no reason for its being offered, except the unavoidable strait to which the deniers of revelation are driven by the unanswerable evidences of

a general deluge, in every part of the globe. And when we consider all the instances which ever have, or can be produced, of additional portions of land to either islands or continents, by the waves of the sea; the accession has been so slow, and so trifling, that it would involve the conclusion of the world's antiquity, little inferior to the absurdity of its absolute eternity ! But this hypothesis has already been refuted in the first lecture of this course.

It would be an unnecessary labor, besides an unreasonable tax upon your patience, to lay before you the objections which have been urged against the deluge, by ingenious philosophers, with the able, clear, and conclusive replies which have been furnished by the friends of revelation. But I can refer those who wish to examine the arguments upon this subject at large, to the *Encyclopedia*, where they will find all the arguments and evidences which appear to be worth preserving and handing down to posterity, upon a subject so important to the faith and interest of revealed religion ; and which are confidently believed to be sufficient to remove all doubts that may arise, respecting the veracity and credibility of the Hebrew historian.

I have now shown by undeniable evidence, that the Mosaic history of the deluge is supported by the testimony of all the most ancient nations, whose histories or traditions have reached the present age. I have proved, that in every continent, and among the most refined, as well as the most barbarous nations of the globe, the same general outlines of the deluge have been retained and believed, through all the generations which have succeeded that memorable epoch. And I now submit the question to the decision of your reason and sober understanding, whether any fact which must depend upon the voice of history, the voice of tradition, and the physical evidences which are scattered over the whole surface of the globe, has ever received a more full, clear, and ample support than the interesting part



of the Mosaic history which has been the subject of this lecture. And I am fully persuaded that whoever will consider the evidences which I have laid before you, with the least degree of candor, will be fully satisfied of the unqualified credit to which the Mosaic history is entitled.

But, after all the facts and evidences which have been adduced in support of the event which Moses has recorded, of an universal deluge, which destroyed the old world, we are urged, by the boasting disciples of reason, to shut our eyes against all these formidable evidences of truth, and attribute the whole narrative to the craft of a designing priesthood, and the credulity of a world of superstitious, weak and deceived enthusiasts ! And suppose we were to make the attempt ; how should we reconcile the absurdity of supposing that the most distant ages and nations ; of the most opposite opinions and religions, as well as pursuits and manners ; should all agree without the least motive, or previous concert, to bear a united testimony to the same subject, for which no adequate foundation, reason, or evidence was afforded ? And further, we beg leave to ask them, in our turn, if the account which the bible furnishes of the deluge be not true, how *will* they, or how *can* they account for the existence of such an ample and universal testimony of the fact, as has bid defiance to the hand of time to erase, and all the arts of skepticism to evade ? In closing this lecture, I feel constrained to ask you, my hearers, what evidence have those, who would persuade you to reject the evidences of revelation, offered to convince you that the history of Moses, which records this tremendous event, is not true ? *Have* they, or *can* they produce a single particle of proof, that the testimony of Moses is false ? They dare not attempt to offer you evidence ; for they know that the attempt would be fraught with nothing but insolence, and the most glaring abuse of your understandings. They may, indeed, scoff ; they may ridicule the most

solemn truths of revelation ; but her solid foundations they can never remove, or even, for an hour, shake !

The Saviour of the world not only accredited, but quoted the testimony of Moses, concerning the deluge, to enforce the solemn conviction of a tremendous judgment which hung over the polluted nation of the Jews. And I may add, an inspired apostle of our Lord, has admonished us, that this signal display of the righteous judgment of God, is a prelude to that awful catastrophe when the globe shall be wrapped in liquid fire, the elements be made to commingle by fervent heat, all human prospects be consumed, a just retribution be administered to every man, according to his works, and the end of the Messiah's reign be accomplished, in subduing all things to his government and kingdom.

## LECTURE VI.

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ST. LUKE xvii. 27.

"They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark : and the flood came and destroyed them all."

In commencing the subject of labor for this evening, I feel it important to notice a popular and prevailing objection to the doctrine of a general deluge, which was the burden of our last lecture.

It is indeed acknowledged, that marine substances, both animal and vegetable, are scattered over the whole face of the globe, in such abundance, that to deny the fact of its having been at one time or at different times, or by parts, successively overflowed with water, would betray an unpardonable ignorance of the surface of the globe, or a disgraceful indifference to the instruction which history has furnished to every enlightened and civilized nation, from the remotest records of antiquity. It is therefore admitted by the opposers of the Bible, that partial inundations of the earth have happened at different periods, and in almost every part of the globe: but still they deny the fact of a general or universal deluge, because, as they contend, there is not a sufficient quantity of water attached to our orb, to produce such an overflow as described in the history by Moses.

If this assertion be true, they are indeed somewhat excusable for their unbelief: for natural impossibilities are never to be admitted, except where the evidence of the immediate and miraculous power of God, amounts to absolute demonstration of the fact proposed: We must therefore inquire whether there *is*, or *is not* a sufficient quantity of water attached to our globe, to produce the deluge for which we have contended. I am aware, that I

might safely refer you to the divine agency, for a cause, adequate to produce all those results which are recorded of the deluge; nor would your speaker for a moment indulge a doubt that it was produced by divine agency: but when such causes can be found within the sphere of human observation as will be sufficient to obviate every objection which modern philosophers can urge, I feel bound to make an appeal to matter of plain fact, the more effectually to silence the most plausible cavils of unbelief.

The plainest principles of mathematical science may be applied to the case before us. A cube of water of the dimensions of only ten miles, will cover a perfectly plain surface of the earth, containing two hundred and fifty square miles, to the depth of four miles: and if we make suitable allowance for all the mountains and hills which it may contain, it would undoubtedly cover a much greater surface. When, therefore, we attempt to calculate the quantity of water which is necessary to deluge the globe, we should make great allowance for the vast number of mountains and hills, with which the globe abounds; for these would render so large a body of water as the ordinary calculation supposes, to a certain extent, unnecessary.

But to give our opposers all the latitude which they can demand, we will proceed without this deduction for the mountains and hills. By the latest computations, the surface of the earth is supposed to contain 199,512,595 square miles. Now to overflow this surface to the depth of four miles, which is something more than the altitude of the highest mountains, it would require a paralleloepid of water, *sixteen* miles in depth, and a surface containing 49,878,148 square miles. In this computation, we only require a body of water *sixteen* miles deep, and whose surface shall be less than *one fourth* of the surface of the earth, to accomplish all that Moses has recorded, so far as the depth of water is concerned, in the overthrow of the world. And can any man be

lieve, when he surveys the map of the world, that the immense seas which there meet his eye, do not contain a *much greater* surface than this plain computation requires?—The truth, that the vast oceans which diversify the face of the globe, contain a far greater quantity of water than was required to accomplish the deluge, is so clear and rational, that I am astonished that men of reason and reflection should ever be led to doubt the fact.

We will now lay aside the consideration of the oceans, and forbear to appeal to the hypothesis of immense and deep caverns contained in the bowels of the earth, and pass to indulge a few thoughts upon the quantity of water which is required to moisten the solid parts of the globe.

That the earth is quite moist at the greatest depths to which it has ever been explored, is a fact universally known and acknowledged: Nor have we any solid reason to suppose that it is not equally moist, even to its very centre.—Now let us observe the immense thickness of the earth; suppose it to be nearly 8000 miles in diameter; the quantity of water which it would require to supply it with the same, or an equal degree of moisture with those parts which have been explored, would be abundantly greater than all the waters of the flood! Nay, this resource alone would be more than sufficient to flood the whole earth and raise the ocean more than four miles above its present level.

Perhaps some of my hearers will be surprised at this computation; but let them soberly examine the facts, and they will see that it falls immensely short of the quantity of water contained in the earth. Let them listen with candor to the ingenious editor of the Encyclopedia, and then decide upon the fact. “To make all reasonable allowances, however, (says he) we shall suppose the whole solid matter of the globe to be only equal to a cube of 5000 miles\*; and even on this supposition we shall find, that all the waters

\*NOTE.—The globe is computed to be from two-thirds to three-fourths water.

of the deluge would not be half sufficient to moisten it."

Let us now proceed to a mathematical demonstration of this fact. We will suppose, on the smallest computation, that the solid matter of the earth is a cube of 5000 miles. This solid body would make the round sum of *twenty-five thousand millions of cubic miles*. Take then the body of water which we have before described, as sufficient to overflow the globe, to the full extent of the Mosaic account; I mean the body of water, *sixteen miles* in depth, and 49,878,148 square miles of surface, and reduce it to cubic miles, and the whole sum will amount to 798,050,368 cubic miles of fluid; which would be about equal to *one pound* of water, to *one hundred and fifty* times its bulk of dry earth! This small proportion of water would scarcely moisten the earth to a degree which would render it perceptible to a careful observer: and it cannot but strike your minds with great force, that the ordinary moisture of the earth, exceeds this proportion by more than *one hundred per cent*.

We have now reduced the fact to a mathematical demonstration, that there is abundantly more water taken up by the solid contents of the earth, than would be sufficient to produce the flood, whose history has been recorded by Moses; after making all reasonable allowances for the quantities of primitive rocks, which are justly supposed to contain but a small portion of fluid. And we have seen, that independent of the ocean and the air, such an event as he describes might have been produced, provided any means can be discovered in nature, by which it could be brought about. But while I attempt to reason upon this subject, on philosophical principles, I beg you, my hearers, not to indulge the thought, that I admit, for a moment, the absence of a divine and all-powerful agency, in bringing about this tremendous event, by which an ungodly world was overthrown. For all the powers of nature are but the quiescent instruments of divine wisdom,

roused into action by his sovereign command, and his unerring will. The Author of nature must surely control and direct all its astonishing powers, and overrule all its vast operations, in a manner perfectly subservient to the infinite designs of his wisdom and goodness.

We may now inquire, and let us do it in the candid and sober exercise of all our reasoning powers ; are there any natural agents by which the astonishing effect of the deluge *could* be produced ? If this question can be fairly answered in the affirmative, without doing violence to the laws of nature, the objections of skeptical philosophers will be silenced, upon the very principles by which they profess to be governed in all their decisions.

My remarks upon the quantity of water, contained in the earth, will enable the curious, inquisitive mind, to avail himself of such actual experiments as will satisfy him of the quantities of that fluid which are required to saturate any given quantity of the ground on which he treads ; if he will first employ the means of bringing it to a state, possessing the least degree of fluidity, which may come within the means at his command. And he may thus arrive at an experimental knowledge of the *possibility* of a general deluge, without renouncing a single fundamental principle which philosophy has laid down.

In accounting for the immediate and physical causes of the deluge, I shall not wander from the plain dictates of revelation and philosophy : for I consider them in perfect harmony, so far as philosophy is capable of extending her discoveries. I shall not, therefore, be under the necessity of departing from the plain and simple narrative which Moses gives of the causes of that tremendous event to the world.

According to his representation, it was not from the moisture diffused through the earth, only ; nor from the vast caverns of the abyss alone ; nor exclusively from the inconceivable magazines of that

element suspended in the atmosphere ; that the astonishing effect which he describes was produced. But he tells us that "the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up."

This language contains a sublime description of the means by which the universal deluge was produced. Nor have deep reflecting Theists and philosophers ever been at a loss to understand its import. For the language which he employs, clearly conveys the sentiment, that the waters of the flood, were not only liberated from the atmosphere, but were also derived from the bowels of the earth.

By the expression, "the windows of heaven were opened," it is plainly signified, that the waters, which were held in suspension in atmospheric air, were discharged upon the earth. Not, indeed, instantaneously, for the historian informs us that it rained *forty days and forty nights*. And by the phrase, "the fountains of the great deep were broken up," has been understood the forcing or issuing out of vast quantities of water from the secret recesses of the earth, where it had remained before in undisturbed repose.

One and the same cause will rationally account for the double effect here described : and it is a cause to which we may appeal with confidence, since its effects are now generally known and acknowledged throughout the enlightened and civilized world. It is not, indeed, as some have imagined, that the air was so charged with water, that it could no longer be held in suspension, but, by reason of its specific gravity, was precipitated to the earth. For it is not to be supposed that all the aqueous particles which the atmosphere ever contained at any one period, could be sufficient to raise the water so as to overflow the mountains, or that they would be likely to produce a much greater effect than merely to overflow the low grounds, were it



all discharged upon the earth at one and the same time.

It has been clearly proved by experiments with the barometer, that during a long drought in summer, the mercury will be found to range at about *thirty inches*. Such being its mean height at the commencement of the drought, it would be natural to expect that it would constantly continue to rise, as the atmosphere continued to receive immense exhalations of water from the surface of the globe. But this is not the case; for the mercury continues nearly stationary until about the close of the drought; and when the air contains the whole quantity of water which it has been for a long time absorbing, it suddenly becomes lighter, and the mercury is seen to sink about one inch, before any rain begins to fall. And what must appear still more surprising, is, that after the water, which is 800 times heavier than the atmosphere, has been profusely discharged for several days in succession, and the face of nature has been drenched with rain, the atmosphere becomes heavier, and the mercury immediately rises; which proves that the driest atmosphere is the heaviest, if it be not heated to any great extent. I have appealed to these facts for two reasons, *first*, to show that it is impossible to calculate with any probability of correctness, what quantities of water are contained in the air, by any experiments to ascertain the extent of atmospheric pressure; and *secondly*, to demonstrate with clearness, that there is an agent in nature, which effectually counteracts the gravity of water, which otherwise could not be suspended in the air, but must instantly be precipitated to the earth by the force of its own gravity.—To this agent we shall appeal, as the instrument by which the general deluge might have been produced.

As we have before hinted, we shall adopt the language of Moses, in its plain and obvious sense, which asserts that “the windows of heaven were

opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up." By *opening the windows of heaven*, we have already remarked, was obviously intended, the liberating and pouring out of the waters which were held suspended in the atmosphere ; and *the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep*, we have been led to conclude was the opening of all those passages through which the subterranean waters might find their way to the surface of the globe. Now as both these sources are said to have been opened in producing the deluge it is by no means unreasonable to suppose that the same natural agent was employed to produce the whole effect which Moses has described, both upon the air and the earth.

The agent of which we are speaking is of modern discovery, though its existence is as ancient as the creation of the world: for it cannot be supposed that so important an agent as *electricity*, was overlooked by the Deity, in bringing into existence the constitution of nature.

"It is certain, (*says the editor of the Encyclopedia*.) that by means of it, immense quantities of water can be raised to a great height in the air. This is proved by the phenomena of water-spouts. Mr. Foster relates, that he happened to see one break very near him, and observed a flash of lightning proceed from it at the moment of its breaking. The conclusion from this is obvious. When the electric matter was discharged from the water, it could no longer be supported by the atmosphere, but immediately fell down.

Though water-spouts do not often appear in this country, yet every one must have made an observation somewhat similar to Mr. Foster's. In a violent storm of thunder and rain, after every flash of lightning or discharge of electricity from the clouds, the rain pours down with increased violence: thus showing that the cloud having parted with so much of its electricity, cannot longer be supported in the form of vapour, but must descend in rain. It is

certain, (*for it has been proved by experiments,*) that evaporation is promoted by electrifying the fluid to be evaporated." The theory, therefore, deduced from these plain and undeniable facts, "that the electric fluid contained in the air is the agent by which it is enabled to suspend the water which rises in vapour," will not be rejected as a groundless chimera, nor pronounced an impossibility, by men of reflection and science.

"Again, (*says the same author,*) we are assured from the most undeniable observations, that electricity is able to swell up water on the surface of the earth. This we can make it do even in our trifling experiments; and much more must the whole force of the fluid be supposed capable of doing it, if applied to the ocean, or any other large bodies of water. The agitation of the sea in earthquakes is sufficient proof of this. It is certain, that at these times there is a discharge of a vast quantity of electric matter from the earth into the air; and as soon as this happens, all becomes quiet on the surface of the earth."

From the facts which have now been stated, it must clearly follow, that whenever the atmosphere is deprived of a due proportion of the electric fluid, rain will, of course, fall in prodigious quantities.

A multitude of observations have long since rendered it apparent, that there is a constant passage of electric matter from the air into the earth, and from the earth into the air. We will now apply this theory to the Mosaic history of the flood in the language of the ingenious author before quoted.

"There is therefore no absurdity in supposing the Deity to have influenced the action of the natural powers in such a manner that for forty days and nights the electric matter contained in the atmosphere should descend into the bowels of the earth. But by whatever cause the descent was occasioned, the consequence would be, the *breaking up of the fountains of the deep*, and the *opening of the windows of heaven*. The water contained in the atmosphere being left

without support, would descend in impetuous rains: while the waters of the ocean, those from which fountains originate, and those contained in the solid earth itself, would rise from the very centre, and meet the waters that descended from above. Thus the breaking up of the fountains of the deep, and the opening the windows of heaven, would accompany each other, as Moses tells us they did; for according to him, both happened on the same day."

By the cause which is here assigned, it is easy to see, that the flood would come on and advance gradually, without that violence to the globe which the admission of other theories must involve. And it is equally easy to discover, that an abatement of the waters would be the natural consequence of a return of the electric fluid to the atmosphere, which would enable it again to absorb its original quantity of water. And the discharge of the electric fluid from the deep recesses of the globe, would again give place for the return of its original waters, and the flood would be stayed and removed from the face of the earth, and nature would resume its pristine appearance.

I have now attended to the principal, and indeed, to the only objection, of any force, that has ever been urged against the fact of a general deluge; and shown that the only important reason which skeptics urge to justify their unbelief, is totally destitute of any foundation in truth: For the quantity of water has been shown to be abundantly more than sufficient to deluge the globe to a much greater depth than the history of Moses has described. Having before proved by the united and universal voice of history and tradition, besides the undeniable indications of such an event, scattered throughout the globe, the validity of the sacred history; I must again appeal to your reason, and demand—What evidence have unbelievers produced to disprove this faithful record of the flood? Can they appeal to the voice of history—to the voice of tradi-

tion, or to the undeniable evidences of nature? No; they will never make the attempt, for they know it would be hopeless. They may indeed, scoff at religion; deny the truth of holy writ, and dispose of the whole in gross; curse its authors, and anathematize the ministers of religion—nay, even exhaust upon them the ebullitions of unmanly invective: But they will never offer you an equivalent for the sacrifice which they demand—*a surrender of your religious hopes.*

In closing, I must beg your indulgence, while I pay a passing tribute of attention to a popular acknowledgment of modern skeptics, which admits that the earth has been partially inundated at different periods. To this acknowledgment they are driven by the undeniable evidence of marine substances, deposited throughout every continent of the globe.

But we deny the fact of such partial inundations; they are altogether inadmissible; because it is impossible that any considerable body of water should remain upon a single continent, since from its specific gravity, it must be immediately discharged into the ocean. The advocates of such a theory, must therefore resort to a *greater miracle* than revelation records, respecting the general deluge: for they must raise the oceans which enclose such a continent, several miles above their common level, to prevent the water from retiring on a sudden from the land! Nor is this the only difficulty attending a partial deluge; for the oceans, when thus raised, must equally overflow the whole globe! The very fact which they deny and ridicule. Thus, my hearers, you see, that the theory of partial inundations, becomes at once impossible, ridiculous, and absurd.

Unbelievers have offered other objections to the deluge, but they are too unimportant to justify me in detaining you with their recital, or their refutation. The main arguments upon this subject are before you; weigh them in the even balance of reason, and judge for yourselves.

## LECTURE VII.

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### II. PETER ii. 6.

"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."

In this chapter, the apostle very justly concludes, that as there were "false prophets among the people," in ancient times, so there would, of course, arise among them, false teachers; bringing in heresies of the most dangerous tendency; even "denying the Lord that bought them:" and assures us that they would bring *swift destruction* upon themselves. Nay, more, that by their seductions, *many* would be led to abandon the paths of true wisdom, and that through their influence "the way of truth *would* be evil spoken of," or be treated with that contempt which is the just desert of imposture.—And my brethren, if we carefully survey the records of all ages since the first promulgation of the gospel of Christ, we shall see that the prediction of the apostle has been verified, even to the letter. Nor need we appeal to the history of former ages for the fulfilment of his prophecy; for examples daily present themselves, of a character too plain and forcible to leave any doubts of its truth upon the mind.

From the language of our text, the evidence is undeniable, that at a period as late as the apostolic age, the story of the fearful and astonishing overthrow of Sodom and the cities of the plain, was currently believed and appealed to with confidence by the writers of the New-Testament, as a fact of undisputed authority. Nor are we informed that the fact referred to by our text, was called in question by any of the profane writers, so late as the period in which the New-Testament was written.

By the Mosaic history, we are informed that it became necessary for Abraham and his nephew, Lot, to separate, as their flocks and herdsmen became numerous, and troublesome to each other. And the latter, it appears, chose to take up his residence in the vale of Siddim, and therefore located himself among the Sodomites. From the history of these people, it is obvious that they exceeded, in the practices of obscenity and wickedness, the inhabitants of all the neighboring countries. But whether the practices to which we allude, were introduced before his residence among them, or were afterwards adopted, we are furnished with no intelligence, either sacred or profane.

The writers of the Old and New-Testaments, however, unite in representing the overthrow of Sodom, and the cities of the plain, as one of the most signal displays of divine judgment, for the wickedness of man, that has ever been recorded of any portion of the globe. And they hold up this fearful catastrophe as a warning to all such as venture to abuse the forbearance of Heaven, to riot amidst the scenes of dissipation, or to violate and abuse the obvious dictates of nature, reason and the law of God.

This view of their destruction, is the probable reason why unbelievers have sought to cavil at the historian, in some instances, and in others, to reject the whole narrative, as the invention of imposture and craft. For it is apparent that they are unwilling to admit that the Deity takes cognizance of human affairs in such a way as to become the direct dispenser of reward and punishment to mankind, since such an acknowledgment would lead to the unavoidable conclusion, that all the judgments of God, recorded in the scriptures, are worthy of confidence and serious regard.

That such cities as Sodom and Gomorrah, once existed on the borders of the country of Palestine, no historian, either ancient or modern, has ever presumed to deny. Nor is this fact denied by any man

of reading and intelligence at the present day. Historians, both sacred and profane, admit that these were once populous and flourishing cities, and that they suffered a complete or entire destruction by fire.

According to scripture chronology, these famous cities were destroyed about nineteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, and have ever since remained a monument of that desolation which sin has occasioned in the world. It appears that these cities were situated in a beautiful and fertile plain, one hundred and eighty miles in circumference, bounded on the east by lofty mountains, and on the north by the plain of Jericho.

After its destruction by fire, it formed the bed of what is now called the "*dead sea*," or lake *Asphaltites*, and receives the waters of the River Jordan, besides several smaller streams; though no outlet has ever been discovered, by which it communicates with the Mediterranean sea.

With the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Zeboim and Admah shared the same fate and were engulfed in the same general ruin: probably because they were corrupted with the same abominations and given up to the same obscene and brutal practices.

The prediction of one of the prophets of God, (*Jeremiah*.) who was born more than six hundred years before Christ, stands forth as an indisputable monument of divine inspiration, since his prediction may still be seen fulfilling, through all the intervening ages, from a period of more than two thousand years to the present day. For when speaking of the desolation of Edom, he compares it to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; saying, "As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it." Jer. xlix. 18.

No changes, however great, which may be supposed to have taken place in other parts of the



globe, was to reach the seat of this desolation, until the period of the final renovation of the earth, by an event equally sublime and terrible with that of the flood. And it is obvious from the most authentic historians, that no human being has ever dwelt in the place of these devoted cities for the space of 3700 years!

Moses, in denouncing the punishments that should descend upon the land of Israel for their rebellion, compares it to the land of Sodom, Gomorrah, Zeboim and Admah; "a land of *brimstone and salt, and burning, that is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, which the Lord overthrew in his anger and in his wrath.*" Deut. xxix. 23.

This language clearly shows that in the days of Moses, more than 300 years after the destruction of these cities, they were well known to the nation of the Jews, and were appealed to with confidence, as evidences of the divine displeasure against sin: And I may here be allowed to ask; if their sudden and astonishing overthrow had not then been a fact of universal notoriety, of what possible use could it have been for Moses to remind the Israelites of such an event? It certainly could add nothing, but must, unless the fact had been well attested, have detracted from the authority of his precepts, and brought the divine inspiration which he claimed, not only into disrepute, but into ridicule and contempt. No reasonable man can suppose that any person of common discernment, would have recourse, or appeal to a ridiculous fable for the purpose of strengthening his authority, unless he was a base impostor, and believed that the people whom he wished to govern were a nation of stupid, insensible beings! Much less a wise and virtuous lawgiver, whose divine inspiration and authority had been severely tested, and proved by astonishing miracles.

That the account which Moses gave more than 3000 years ago, of this land of *brimstone and salt and burning*, was substantially true, is clearly proved by

Volney, a French Philosopher of the last century; and whose testimony will doubtless be well received by modern skeptics, since he had the credit of being a file leader of their party. He asserts that this famous lake "contains neither animal nor vegetable life. We see no verdure on its banks, nor a fish to be found in its waters." But he adds, that it is not true that its exhalations are pestiferous, so as to destroy birds flying over it, "It is very common (says he) to see swallows skimming its surface, and dipping for the water necessary to build their nests. The real cause which deprives it of vegetables and animals, is the extreme saltness of the water, which is infinitely stronger than that of the sea. The soil around it, equally impregnated with this salt produces no plants; and the air itself, which becomes loaded with it from evaporation, and which receives also the sulphurous and bituminous vapours, cannot be favourable to vegetation: Hence the deadly aspect which reigns around this lake. In other respects, the ground about it, however, is not marshy; and its waters are limpid and incorruptible, as must be the case with a dissolution of salt." He informs us that on the shores of this lake, were found, "fragments of sulphur and bitumen, which the Arabs convert into a trifling article of commerce; as also hot fountains and deep crevices, which are discovered at a distance by little pyramids built on the brink of them. We likewise find a sort of stone, which on rubbing, emits a noxious smell, burns like bitumen, receives a polish like white alabaster, and is used for the paving of court yards. At intervals, we also meet with unshapen blocks, which prejudiced eyes mistake for mutilated statues, and which pass with ignorant and superstitious pilgrims for monuments of the adventure of Lot's wife: though it is no where said that she was metamorphosed into stone, like Niobe, but into salt, which must have melted the ensuing winter."

This attentive audience will not fail to notice the striking similarity of the description which Volney here gives, of the deadly appearance of this lake and its borders, embracing the *salt*, the *sulphur*, the *bitumen*, and the subterranean fire, and that which Moses gave of the same place, at a period 3000 years distant from the date of this writer. So that this particular part of the Mosaic history is not only supported, but the prediction of its future desolation and barrenness is clearly confirmed by an *unbeliever* and *despiser* of revelation, who stood high for his learning and acuteness, in the ranks of deistical (or rather, atheistical) philosophy.

His allusion to Lot's wife, and the pillar of salt, deserve a passing notice. He tells us that if it were a pillar of salt, it "must have melted the ensuing winter." All this may be admitted, without invalidating a syllable of the Mosaic account, for he makes no mention of the length of time which this monument continued. Mr. Volney might have spared himself the trouble, therefore, of assigning a reason for its early removal. But, let us observe—Mr. Volney appears to have been acquainted with the Hebrew, and other original languages, and therefore could not have been ignorant of the true meaning and proper application of the word which Moses employed to designate the change which constituted Lot's wife a monumental reproof of unbelief and disobedience. We would willingly excuse this writer from an intention to trifle with the necessary want of information among the most numerous class of his readers, (who, of course, must be unacquainted with the Hebrew,) if we were in possession of any means to accomplish the object, without violating the dictates of reason and conscience; but this we shall not presume to do; for he must have known, that from time immemorial, the Hebrews have ranked *sulphur*, *nitre* and *bitumen*, under the general name of *salt*. Had he have stated this fact, his readers might readily have formed the conclusion

that a monument composed of sulphur, nitre and bitumen, would naturally resist, for a considerable time, the power of the seasons, to bring on, and finally to accomplish its entire destruction. This would allow of an opportunity for multitudes to visit the scene of desolation, and to make accurate observations on what they there beheld.

The history of the overthrow of these cities might have been given by Moses, without the mention of the fate of Lot's wife; and it would therefore be strange that Moses should mention such an astonishing circumstance, unless it were a notorious fact; since he must have seen that any serious and well-founded doubts of this part of his narrative, would tend directly to cast suspicion on the whole history. I am therefore constrained to believe that this pillar remained for ages; and that it was seen and acknowledged by multitudes.

While we are upon the story of Lot's wife, it may not be improper to mention an heathen form of exorcism, preserved by Alexander Traillianus, a philosopher and physician of the sixth century; which he gives in the following words; "In the name of God, who turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt."—Here you find heathens, confirming, by their rites, the plain and simple fact recorded by Moses.

I shall add to these the declaration of Christ, who tells his disciples, St. Luke, xvii. 29, that "the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all." This fact, he employs in his charge to his disciples, to leave Jerusalem as soon as they should see the signs fulfilled which were to precede the destruction of that ill-fated city: and to render the admonition still more impressive, he adds, verse 32, "Remember Lot's wife." To discredit the story of Lot's wife, we are not only under the necessity of setting aside the testimony of Moses, the uniform belief of the Jewish nation for more than three thousand years, with the addition of the evidence drawn from

heathen rites ; but we must directly confront the divine authority and truth of the Son of God !

Such evidence of the fact concerning Lot's wife as I have been able to select with convenience, is now before you : and is there any evidence to *disprove* the fact ? It will not be pretended by any man who values his reputation for historical knowledge. It is therefore left for you to decide whether you will reject this testimony, array yourselves against the Redeemer of the world, believe the whole history false, without a particle of testimony to support your reason in so doing ; and what is still more absurd, to believe *against* all the evidence which has ever been adduced in support of the fact.

If I were disposed to gratify the inquisitive hearer, as to the means by which this strange effect was produced upon Lot's wife, I confess that I should feel inclined to offer them the ingenious solution of Dr. Taylor ; who supposes that " the sulphurous storm did not begin to fall upon Sodom, till Lot was safely arrived at Zoar. But his wife looked back *before* she reached Zoar: When she looked back, Sodom and its plains appeared as pleasant as before. She looked back with affection to the place, and regret at leaving it; according to the import of the original word: This implied unbelief. She stopped by the way, and left her husband to go by himself—she would go no farther, and might be at a considerable distance from *Zoar*, and so near to *Sodom*, as to be involved in the terrible shower, and thereby turned into a nitro-sulphurous pillar."

I would not, however, adopt any conjecture, which would imply a doubt of the miraculous power of God; for no supposition aside from the divine interposition can account for this wonderful event.

I have passed by the testimony of Josephus, who declares that this pillar was standing in his day, and that he had seen it; as well as the marvellous and incredible stories, given by numerous others: *for I would not wander into the region of fables for*

the sake of amusement. I shall therefore return to our general subject, the destruction of Sodom, and the cities of the plain.

The account with which we are furnished in the Bible, informs us that the Lord rained upon them, *fire and brimstone*; or *brimstone inflamed*: which, according to some able critics, “signifies, in the Hebrew style of writing, nothing more nor less than lightning.” Admit this interpretation, and the conclusion will follow, that the lightnings of heaven were let loose, and directed to this fatal spot to accomplish its destruction. That the bed of these cities was bitumen; composed principally of sulphur and mineral pitch, is a truth, fully supported by all historians and travellers of distinction, who have written upon the subject. The direct inference would therefore be, that the lightnings of heaven communicated fire to this combustible and inflammable substance, and not only destroyed the buildings and the inhabitants, but literally burnt up the foundation on which they rested, and gave place to the waters of the lake Asphaltites, so famous in the history of antique ruins.

Some have supposed that a volcanic eruption took place at that time, by which a great quantity of inflamed bituminous matter was thrown into the air, and fell in a shower of fire upon these cities and destroyed them: but this would not account for the sinking of these places, unless we add the probability of an earthquake, of which no mention is made in the narrative of Moses.

It is in vain to wander into the region of conjecture, to find a solution for the numerous inquiries which may be started by inquisitive minds; it is sufficient for our present design to show that abundant testimony is furnished to establish the fact, that these cities were destroyed by fire, and that this destruction was of a character dissimilar to all others. Nothing of the kind, recorded by historians, challenges competition with the destruction of these

cities. Pompei and Herculaneum, in Italy, were indeed covered by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, seventy-nine years after the birth of Christ ; but they still remain as far above the level of the sea as before, and are again capable of being inhabited.— But Sodom and the cities of the plain, have suffered an entire destruction, so that nothing but a miracle could ever restore them.

It was observed by Justin, that the lake of Sodom was unmoved by the winds, by reason of the quantities of bitumen which rose from its bed, and which impeded its navigation. The Arabs and others, have always removed this mineral pitch, as it rose, so that there is now very little to be seen.

Tacitus, the Roman historian, observes that the traces of fire which consumed these cities, were visible in his day. These are his words,—“at no great distance are those fields, which, as it is said, were formerly fruitful, and covered with great cities, till they were consumed by lightning ; the vestiges of which still remain in the parched appearance of the country, which has lost its fertility.” The accounts which Pliny and Philo furnish of these ruins, accord with that which we have quoted from Tacitus.

Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian, who flourished about half a century before the birth of Christ, gives a general description of the desolations which reign around this devoted place. In closing his remarks, he says, “The region round about, burning with fire, exhales a stench so intolerable, that the bodies of the inhabitants are diseased, and their lives contracted.”

Strabo, a Capadocian historian, who flourished in the reign of Tiberius, thus concludes his remarks upon this lake and the surrounding country : “There are many indications that fire has been over this country : for about Masada they show rough and scorched rocks, and caverns in many places eaten in, and the earth reduced to ashes, and drops of *pitch* distilling from the rocks, and hot streams, of-

fensive afar off, and habitations overthrown ; which renders credible some reports among the inhabitants, that there were formerly thirteen cities on that spot, the principal of which was Sodom ; so extensive as to be sixty furlongs in circumference ; but that by earthquakes, and an eruption of fire, and by hot and bituminous waters, it became a lake as it now is ; the rocks were consumed, some of the cities were swallowed up, and others abandoned by those of the inhabitants who were able to escape."

Solinus, who flourished in the third century, informs his readers, that "at a considerable distance from Jerusalem, a frightful lake extends itself, which has been struck by lightning, as is evident from the ground, black, and reduced to ashes." In a word ; besides Mr. Volney, whose testimony has before been quoted, Moundrel, Dr. Pococke, Shaw, and other scientific gentlemen, who visited these ancient ruins, have given to the world the valuable result of their investigations, which go directly to confirm the statements of the sacred historian. Those who wish to peruse an interesting description of this singular lake, may be gratified by consulting Basselius, in his treatise on illustrious ruins.

When the prophet Isaiah denounces the judgment of God against the city of Babylon, he appeals to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, as a fact well authenticated. Her fearful doom is announced in the following tremendous denunciation ; "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be *as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah*. It shall *never be inhabited*, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation : neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there."—Isa. xiii. 19, 20. The prophet Amos expressly mentions the overthrow of these cities as a judgment of God for their wickedness.—Chapter iv. 11. Nearly all the prophetic writers of the Old Testament, have alluded to this same event, and have thereby given evidence



that the overthrow of these sinful cities was a fact well authenticated, and universally believed.

I cannot consent to dismiss this subject, without giving a moment's attention to the prophecy of Isaiah, which has already been quoted. He compares the desolation which should come upon Babylon, to that which reigned over the ancient seat of Sodom and Gomorrah, which God had destroyed and rendered uninhabitable forever, on account of the enormity of their crimes. And has not this solemn and extraordinary prophecy, which was uttered more than one hundred years before the Babylonish captivity, been literally fulfilled? Yes; for Babylon has been uninhabited for centuries, and all the immediate country is rendered a sunken, and unhealthy desolation; and absolutely dangerous to the traveller, whose curiosity has prompted him to visit that once populous and flourishing region of the globe. And can any man, in the exercise of his sober reason, believe that God would sanction a palpable untruth, by the inspiration of his wisdom? It cannot be; and yet this glaring absurdity is involved in the impious conclusion, that the cities of which we have been treating, were not destroyed for their wickedness.

If, therefore, we reject the Mosaic account of the miraculous destruction of these cities, we must not only disbelieve the history of this prophet, but we must abandon, as impostors, all the prophets who have spoken of, or alluded to this event; treat the Son of God as a deceiver! suppose the apostles to be knaves or dupes, and shut our eyes against the testimony of profane historians and all the interesting narratives of distinguished individuals, who have visited these ruins in modern ages. And now I ask you, my hearers, what authority is offered by modern skeptics to justify us, in case we comply with their wishes, in disbelieving the testimony which has been adduced? Nothing, but their *bare denial*, their *determined hostility*, and their *relentless satire*! They would have you believe that all these

testimonies are false, without a particle of evidence to sustain the conclusion! nay, they would even persuade you to believe their declarations, *against all evidence*, both sacred and profane!—Beware then of deception; listen to the admonitions of truth and be wise; “Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.”

## LECTURE VIII.

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ST. JOHN v. 46, 47.

"Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me : for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words ?"

The circumstances which called forth the pointed address, of which our text is a part, are briefly narrated in the preceding context of this chapter ; where we are informed of the miracle by which the great Redeemer healed a man of an infirmity which he had borne for the space of *thirty-eight years*. Against the benevolence of this act, the Jews could offer no complaint ; but the day on which the miracle was performed, was the subject of their grievance, and gave birth to their murmurings against the Son of God. They insisted that he must be an irreligious man, since they construed this display of his power and benevolence, on a day held by them in such veneration, into an irreverence and disregard for the institution of the Sabbath.

Their superstitious zeal had so far blinded their reason, that they were betrayed into the absurd and ridiculous hypothesis, that it was "unlawful *even* to do good on the Sabbath day !" thereby arraying the law of God against the pure display of mercy and benevolence !

This blind, fanatical zeal, with which they were infected, led them to persecute the Saviour, and to seek opportunities to accomplish his destruction : But to place the evidence of his divine authority and doctrine in a plain and striking manner before them, Christ reminds them of the testimony of John the Baptist, who was a bright and burning light, and in whom, for a time, they all rejoiced : for he had borne witness to the mission of Christ, and to the divine *approbation* which he had received from God. He

also appealed to the works or miracles which he had performed in the name of his Father; and finally, to the testimony of Moses, in whom they professed to believe; alleging that this celebrated lawgiver had written of him. Hence he takes occasion to question the sincerity of their professions of confidence in what Moses had taught, and infers the evidence of their infidelity to their own prophet, from the fact of their rejecting him of whom that prophet had written: But he admonishes them, saying, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is *one* that accuseth you, *even* Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" From this language it is evident that Christ sanctioned the divine authority of the Mosaic records.

As there were, in the days of Christ, those who discredited the writings of Moses, even so, there are multitudes at the present day, who reject his testimony and treat it with reproach. But at this enlightened age, it is, and ought to be, confidently expected, that in case his prophetic inspiration can be clearly and fully supported by an appeal to the authentic pages of history, his writings must and ought to be received and accredited as of divine authority. To accomplish this object, will be the design of the labors for this evening.

I shall not trouble you, my hearers, with a long and useless prelude, nor trespass upon your sympathies by complaining of the arduous labor assigned me: for the task upon which I enter, though it must present to you the historical evidence of numerous scenes of suffering, the most severe and protracted of any which the annals of nations have recorded, yet it is a labor upon which I enter with cheerfulness, from a conviction of its importance to man's best hopes, which must stand or fall with the truth of prophetic inspiration. I therefore solicit you to

give the subject a candid and impartial hearing, and to weigh every argument and evidence which may be adduced in the even balance of reason.

In the discharge of this duty, I must call your attention to some of the most extraordinary prophecies of Moses, and briefly lay before you the history of their fulfilment. The limits of a single discourse forbid that the selections from the writings of this prophet should be numerous; and hence the necessity of embracing those, and those only, which are the most striking and important.

The first prophetic passage of his writings which you are invited to consider, is recorded in Leviticus, xxvi. 33. "And I will scatter you among the heathen, and draw out a sword after you; and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste."

It is proper here to remind you that Moses had before instructed the children of Israel that they should enter in and possess the land of Canaan, and had also foretold the astonishing success and prosperity which should attend them: He had now, in the chapter which contains this singular prophecy, been describing to them the various blessings and advantages which should attend them and their posterity, in case they persevered in obedience to the divine commands: but upon their rebellion and wilful disobedience, numerous and severe punishments were to be visited upon them as a people, among which, that which is mentioned in the prophecy under consideration, holds a conspicuous place.

In this passage Moses tells his brethren that their *land* should be desolate, and their *cities* waste: But at the period of this annunciation, they possessed neither land nor cities. The language is therefore *doubly* prophetic: had they then failed to take possession of the promised land, the whole prophecy would not only have been regarded as a base imposture, but the authority of his successor would probably have been challenged, and his person treated and despi-

sed as that of an unprincipled and ambitious usurper.—Moses was doubtless aware of this, and yet he betrays no symptoms of doubt or uncertainty as to the event; but the most entire confidence that all which he had spoken would be fulfilled. The reason, my hearers, for this confidence, is plain and forcible; he knew that what he uttered was by divine authority, and therefore, could not fail of accomplishment.

The first part of this prophecy, which related to their possession of the land and cities of Palestine, no man, who possesses any knowledge of Jewish, or universal history, can entertain the least doubt, concerning its fulfilment: For the fact is rendered too obvious for denial, without an indiscriminate rejection of all historical evidence. The remaining part of this prophecy, which announces that they should be *scattered among the heathen*, and that a *sword*, the emblem of oppression and destruction, should be *drawn out against them*, remains yet to be considered.

And can any attentive reader of history be ignorant of the fulfilment of this prediction? Can any traveller upon the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa, or even of America, for a moment resist the evidence of his senses, in confirmation of this interesting fact, so long foretold?

From the days of Moses, during the period of 400 years, in which that nation was governed by Judges, no less than *six* captivities befel them, and each attended with immense and cruel slaughter. 1. They were captured by the Mesopotamians, and held in bondage *eight years*;—2. By the Moabites;—3. By the Philistines;—4. By Jabin, king of Hazor;—5. By the Midianites;—6. By the Ammonites and Philistines. All these captivities took place more than 1100 years before the birth of Christ. After these two captivities are mentioned of the house of Israel, which are worthy of particular notice; since these captivities effectually scattered the *ten tribes*.

Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, called by profane historians, *Ninus Junior*, took several cities, and carried away a multitude of captives, principally from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manassah: Concerning these we have no account of their return. This captivity occurred about 750 years before the birth of Christ.

About *nineteen years* after this, Salmanasar, another king of Assyria, invaded Samaria, and after a siege of three years, made himself master of the whole country, and carried the remaining part of the ten tribes, which had been left by Tiglath-Pileser, into captivity, and planted them beyond the river Euphrates, from which place the great body of them never have returned: Thus ended the kingdom of Israel. It is undoubtedly true, however, that a portion of each of the tribes escaped this captivity, and remained in Samaria. Some of the Israelitish captives also had permission to return to their own land, so that a sufficient number remained in Palestine in our Saviour's day to represent all the ten tribes. Besides these, it appears from the Samaritan Chronicle, as quoted by Don Calmet, "that in the 35th year of the pontificate of Abdelus, 3000 Israelites, by the permission of king Sauredius, returned from captivity, under the conduct of Adus, son of Siuneon."

From the recent investigations of some of the most learned in India, the Affghan and Pyran nations are the descendants of the ten tribes. Dr. Buchanan informs us that when he visited the Black Jews in the South of India, he inquired of them where their brethren of the ten tribes were to be found, or the great body of them; and he tells us that they readily answered, "in the north, in the regions adjacent to Chaldea, the very country whither they were first carried into captivity."

Sir William Jones has given it as his opinion, that the Affghans are Jews, and quotes various authorities in confirmation of that opinion. "We learn,"

says this writer, "from Esdras, that the ten tribes, after a wandering journey, came to a country called Arsareth, where we may suppose they settled.— Now the best Persian historians affirm that the Affghans are descended from the Jews ; and they have among themselves traditions of the same import.— It is even asserted, that their families are distinguished by the names of Jewish tribes."

Should it be asked why they have not retained the records of their country ? The answer is perfectly easy: The Mahomedans came upon them with a powerful invading army ; first inspiring them with the expectation of being exterminated, and then proposing to incorporate with them, and of uniting all their forces against the infidels. To render this proposal sure of acceptance, these invaders alleged that they were Jews ; that they practiced circumcision and kept the Sabbath. Through fear, the Affghans consented to the proposal, when their ancient institutions soon became corrupted ; their sacred books diminished in number, till they finally disappeared ; since which time, they have passed for Mahomedans.

Dr. Buchanan informs us there were Affghans in Calcutta at the time he resided there, and that he employed one of them as a servant : That he asked him "if he was a Mahomedan ; and that he answered "No, I am a Mahomedan Jew." This same author tells us that the account which the Affghans give of themselves, is, that they are descendants from the Jews. They assert that their common histories record the names of David and Saul, besides the names of other kings of Israel.

It is impossible to calculate with certainty, to what extent the ten tribes have been scattered. But it is too obvious for denial, that the prophecy of Moses which announced that they should be "*scattered among the heathen,*" has received a literal fulfilment.

I have now laid before you the fulfilment of his prophecy, so far as the captivity and scattering of



the ten tribes is concerned : it now remains to show the entire fulfilment of the whole prophecy, which foretold the dispersion of the whole nation. But before I proceed to this proof, it may be expedient to notice for a moment, some facts concerning the present location of the scattered remnants of these tribes, so far as the historical evidence can with convenience be introduced, without an unreasonable amplification.

A late traveller in India, (Dr. Buchanan,) informs us that he visited a colony of black Jews, in Cochen, (*a British province in Hindostan,*) who told him that they were the descendants of the ten tribes whose history we have before noticed. The same traveller mentions also a colony of white Jews, in the same province, living on the sea-coast. The number of these colonists, amount to about 16,000. A small colony of Samaritan Jews are located near the Mediterranean Sea. Indeed, through all the eastern continents, these interesting people are found, and among every kind of people and nation, they have preserved such of their laws and religious ceremonies, as clearly distinguish them from all the rest of the world. They were, therefore, emphatically "scattered among the heathen," according to the prediction of Moses.

Soon after the general captivity of the ten tribes, commenced the captivities of the houses of Judah and of Benjamin. The *first* of these captivities occurred a little more than six hundred years before the birth of Christ ; under the reign of Jehoiakim, when the prophet Daniel, (who was of the royal family,) and many others, were carried to Babylon. The *second* happened only about *three years* after, when the Babylonians again invaded Judea, and carried away captives to the number of 3023 Jews. The *third* was effected about *five years* later, under the reign of Jehoiakim, son of the former prince of the same name, who with a multitude of the Jews, were captured and removed by the king of Babylon.—

About ten years after the last mentioned captivity, Nebuchadnezzar again invaded the Jews, and carried Zedekiah, king of Judea, and the great body of the nation which remained, to Babylon. Here commenced the famous captivity which was foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, and limited by the prophecy of Daniel to the term of *seventy years*. During these seventy years, their country was left *desolate*, and their *cities* were laid *waste*, as Moses had predicted. And although multitudes of them were permitted to return, under the reign of Cyrus, the Medo-Persian prince, who made himself master of the Babylonish empire, still great numbers of them, unwilling to abandon the estates they had acquired in Chaldea, never returned to their own native country.

After their return from this captivity, the Jews are said to have carefully avoided the practice of idolatry, either in the worship of *images*, or of the *hosts of heaven*; believing that all, or nearly all the sad reversions of their national prosperity, had been occasioned by their departures from the statutes and commandments of Heaven. From that period, the Jews were never again carried into captivity till near the close of the apostolic age.

Soon after the crucifixion of the Saviour, the Jews began to prepare themselves for a formidable resistance to the Romans, to whose power they were partially in subjection. They did not break out in open hostilities, however, so as to produce any serious results, until about *seventy years* after the birth of Christ. Then the tocsin of war was sounded throughout the plains of Judea, and echoed through all her mountains. The Romans rallied their forces and attempted to awe the Jews into submission, but in vain. Proud of the antiquity of their nation, and inflated by superstitious confidence in the holiness of their city and temple, they bade defiance to the masters of the world, and scorned submission to any human power. Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian, was placed at the head of a powerful invading

army, and planted the Roman standard over against the walls of Jerusalem. This formidable city held out for a long time, after the rest of the cities of Palestine fell into the hands of the conquering Romans. At last, however, after a long and painful struggle, the walls of Jerusalem were broken, the city and temple destroyed, thousands fell by sword, famine, and pestilence ; and the residue became captives to their conquerors. They were distributed throughout the Roman empire, more or less of them dwelling in every country, and in almost every city.

In, or near the middle of the second century, in the days of Adrian, the Jews again rallied their forces, and made a desperate effort to free themselves from the Roman power. This was the signal for their masters to crush and destroy them as a nation forever, and scatter them to the four winds, by dispersing them throughout every province and country, till, as a people, they were literally drained of all the means that could render them either formidable, or even troublesome to the Romans.

Since that period, they have been compelled to wander as outcasts in every country, where trade and money circulate, and even to this day, they are scattered through every nation and kingdom, and are well known throughout the whole civilized world. How plainly and literally do we behold, in the present state of the Jews, the full and entire accomplishment of the prediction to which your attention has been called ! A prediction which was uttered by Moses, more than 3000 years since, and which, through a period of nearly 1800 years, has stood without a parallel in the records of human kind !— They are, indeed, a monument of the divine displeasure, set up, as it were, in every country, and preserved through a long succession of ages, to warn mankind of the faithfulness of ancient prophecy, and the danger and misery which await a rebellious nation.

In the same connexion, we find other prophecies

of Moses, which are still more minute and astonishing: Prophecies which stand alone, embracing events with which nothing that can be found in the histories of other nations, will for a moment compare. As a specimen of these wonderful predictions, I beg leave to call your attention to the chapter before named, viz. Lev. xxvi. 44; where Moses, in the spirit of prophecy, is directed to announce, in the name of the Lord, and does announce, saying, "*And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God.*" This prophecy perfectly corresponds with that of Jeremiah, xxx. 11, and xli. 22. "*For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have dispersed thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure; and will not altogether consume thee.*"

This prophecy of Moses, which is of the same import with that of Jeremiah, is of such a singular character, that its meaning has never been a subject of dispute, neither among Jews or Gentiles. For it is obvious to all such as are acquainted with the theological writings of both Jews and Christians, that they have all agreed that it was a prophetic assurance of the preservation of the Jews, as a *distinct* and *separate* people, even in all their dispersions through every age and country. Lest any of my hearers should be left in doubt, however, respecting the correctness of this interpretation, I would just remark, that the prophecy of which we are treating, contains a plain and direct reference to the covenant promise of God to Moses, which stands recorded in the xxxiii. Chap. 16th and 17th verses: "*For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken.*"

From these passages, we are plainly instructed that Jehovah entered into solemn covenant to preserve the posterity of Jacob as a separate people, from all others upon the face of the earth. And I here ask, have not these prophecies been a standing and unanswerable evidence of the divine inspiration of Moses, for more than three thousand years? The fact can never be denied, without condemning and contradicting the faithful voice of sacred and profane history. Nay; I had almost said, that no man dare deny its truth. But I remember that some modern skeptics have had the effrontery to affirm, that *the prophecies were written after the facts had transpired*! Such assertions, either prove their profound ignorance of history; or, what is worse, their determination to break down every barrier which opposes the progress of infidelity, whether right or wrong! But their weakness, surely must excite the pity of all candid and sincere Christians: And though the voice of history is sufficient to silence their weak and deceitful pretensions, still they may have the address to deceive and lead astray the young and uninformed mind. It is therefore expedient to remind the rising generation, that the writings of Moses were acknowledged by some of the most ancient authors of profane history, among the Chaldeans, Persians, Egyptians and Greeks; all which were written long before the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans; and which have been the sources of evidence to which we have appealed in several of the preceding lectures. The denial, therefore, of the antiquity of the Mosaic records, only proves the weakness of the cause which modern skepticism has espoused.

Whoever will be at the trouble of reading the history of Josephus, will find an ample refutation of this childish pretence. Or, whoever will read the modern history of the Jews, or listen to the recital of modern travellers upon the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, will be furnished with the clearest

evidence, that the prophecies under consideration are even now receiving their fulfilment. So that the objection which we have been called to notice, is an abuse of common fact and common honesty.

Before I dismiss this objection, I will simply remark, that the objection itself betrays the cause which it was intended to support. For it is clearly an acknowledgment that the facts set forth are all contained in the prophecy. It therefore devolves on them to prove that the facts occurred before the prophecy was written. But this, no man of common sense and historical reading will dare attempt. There is another objection which unbelievers have pressed into their service, and which they frequently urge against the inspiration of Moses. They tell us that it is natural to suppose that the Jews have avoided intermarrying with any other nation, in consequence of their being strictly forbidden to do so, by one of the plainest injunctions of their law. Now this objection, to say the least, acknowledges that the Jews have always believed in the divine authority of the law which was given by Moses, and that they have given substantial evidence of the sincerity of their faith, by resisting one of the strongest temptations which inclination and interest could lay before them. For the most ordinary understanding cannot avoid perceiving, that had they mingled with other nations by intermarriages, they would soon have lost their national identity, and thus escaped all the persecutions and sufferings through which they have waded, for nearly 1800 years. Of this, the Jews have always been sensible; and yet, notwithstanding their ardent desire to be free from such persecutions, and their unutterable dread of such sufferings as they have experienced, they are, and have been so disposed, by the overruling providence of God, as to maintain their separate character amidst the most astonishing oppressions and miseries which have ever fall-

en to the lot of any nation or people upon the face of the globe.

The weakness of the objection which we are considering will be perfectly apparent, if we reflect for a moment, how trifling the offence of intermarrying with other nations would have been, compared with other offences which they committed, times without number. The principal object to be secured by prohibiting their intermarriages with other nations, was to preserve them from one of the most powerful temptations to which they would be exposed, of joining them in the rites of idolatry: And yet how often did they forsake the worship of God, and bow down to the idols of the heathen! How often did the prophets complain and lament that the Jews caused their children to pass through the fire as an offering to Moloch, contrary to the express command of God?

It was impossible for Moses, or any other man, to foresee, by any human calculation, that the Israelites would not break every command which they had received, forsake every ordinance of their law, amalgamate with other nations, and in a short time be swallowed up in the great mass of human population, so as utterly to lose their national identity and character: Human wisdom, supported by general observation, would surely have anticipated such a result, instead of embracing a conclusion that was contrary to all precedent, and which still stands without a parallel in the annals of all nations.

Nothing but the confident assurance, that what he uttered was the voice of God, could ever have induced Moses, or any reasonable man, holding the high and honorable station which he filled, to venture such assertions as these predictions contain. And their accurate and astonishing fulfilment, entirely justifies the confidence with which he announced these great events to the tribes of Jacob.

Had not his predictions been fulfilled, his writings *would long* since have fallen into disgrace, and his

name sunk to oblivion; or been preserved only in story, as an example of daring presumption and mad imposture. But thank God, his memory lives in the hearts of his wandering and dispersed countrymen, and his name stands enrolled in the records of undying fame as the prophet and friend of God.

There are other prophecies, which have been recorded by Moses, still more astonishing than any which have yet been brought under consideration; and whose fulfilment is so clearly marked by history, as to settle, forever, the question of his divine inspiration.

There are also a few popular objections to the writings of this prophet which experience and candor call us to consider. These I beg leave to inform the audience, will be the subject of our next lecture.

And now, my brethren and friends, let no inferior subject divert our minds from the investigation of that divine truth, which is so important to our hopes and our happiness. And may heavenly wisdom direct us in the pathway of understanding, and secure to us "that good part which shall not be taken away."



## LECTURE IX.

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ST. JOHN v. 46, 47.

“Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me : for he wrote of me, But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words ?”

In my last Lecture, some of the prophecies of Moses were brought forward, and carefully compared with the history of their fulfilment. Many of my hearers were doubtless satisfied of the divine inspiration of that prophet, from the evidence then adduced. But since it is obvious that much depends upon the prophetic inspiration of Moses, and that the credibility of those who followed him in the prophetic office, will derive additional strength from the overwhelming evidence of his inspiration, it is not inconsistent with the design of our present labors, to lay other prophecies which have been recorded by him, before you, and the historical evidence by which their fulfilment is placed beyond a reasonable doubt : The prophecies which have been recorded by Moses, and which now present themselves for consideration, are, in some respects, peculiarly strange and astonishing. That they stand without a precedent, and challenge a parallel in the annals of all ages, has long since been asserted and proved, both by Jewish and Christian writers.

The text which we have chosen as a motto to direct our thoughts, asserts that Moses wrote of Christ. Although many passages of his writings have a direct reference to the Saviour of the world, and might be urged with great propriety in confirmation of this truth; still we shall forbear to notice any which do not appear to be of the first importance to the great object of our present labours; or, which are *not* supported by such historical evidence as will

commend itself to the reason and understanding of my hearers.

It has before been shown, not only by the evidence of history, but by the acknowledgments of those who affect to disbelieve the whole testimony, that the Jews sincerely believed in the divine legation, and prophetic inspiration of Moses. This fact, therefore, renders it expedient for me to advert to one of the prophecies recorded by him, which, perhaps, more than any other, has baffled the arts and confounded the arguments of the most learned among the descendants of the house of Jacob.

The passage to which I allude is recorded in the book of Genesis, xlix. 10. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and to him shall the gathering together of the people be."

The name *Shiloh*, signifies a *Saviour*, a *Peace-Maker*. The plain import of the language here employed, is, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah, or Judah should not be destitute of one to sit upon the throne of authority, or one to give laws to the house of Judah, until the Saviour and Peace-Maker should make his appearance in the world; and it therefore directly implies, that after this illustrious character should appear, the sceptre, which is the token or emblem of authority, should depart from the house of Judah, and that there should be no one to give laws to that nation, from among the ancient tribes: At least, that no legitimate authority, or independence, should be possessed and exercised by them.

That this prediction was literally fulfilled, every attentive reader of history will bear me witness: For there never was a time, from the days of Moses, until after the captivity of the Jews by the Romans, in which they were not governed by Rulers of their own appointment. Even during the Babylonish captivity, the Jews it is said were permitted to be governed by their own laws; and ap-

point their own rulers; in such manner as not to interfere with the established laws of the Babylonish Empire. It is further evident from the story of Susanna, that the Jews had Judges and Elders in Babylon, who governed them, and decided matters in dispute juridically according to their laws: For it appears that this woman was condemned to be stoned to death by the judges, upon the false testimony of two of the Elders, who were, however, themselves condemned to suffer that punishment in her stead, as the just demerit of their perjury. It is also contended by Don Calmet, that the refuse of the Israelites were left in Judea, during this famous captivity, and were governed by Josiah and other kings of Judah.

Should it however be doubted, that during the Babylonish and other captivities, the Jews were governed by their own Rulers; we reply, that some of the most eminent Jewish writers have entirely obviated the objection to the application of this prophecy to the Messiah, on that account: For the Targum of Onkelos renders the passage thus—"There shall not fail from Judah one exercising dominion forever; until king Messiah come." The obvious import of this rendering is, that the power of government should not be entirely removed from the Jewish nation, at, or during any period, until the Messiah should make his appearance. This is substantially the sense and meaning of the Christian interpretation. And it is just to remark in this stage of our inquiries, that Onkelos is supposed to have lived sometime before the birth of Christ, and has always been esteemed by the Jews, as one of the most able, faithful and literal translators and expositors of the Hebrew text.

My brethren, I might with a great degree of confidence, forbear to quote any farther evidence of the application of this prophecy; but I deem it prudent, at least, to furnish other testimony. The Targum of Jonathan, and that which is termed the Je-

rusalem Targum, render this passage thus—"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until *the time* when the king Messiah shall come." Thus it appears undeniable, that the most respectable authorities among the Jewish writers have clearly applied the prophecy under consideration to Christ, the anointed Saviour of the world. The Targum, or exposition of Jonathan, is supposed by some to have been written about *thirty* years before the birth of Christ—that of Onkelos a little later, and that of Jerusalem unknown; though some critics have considered it still more ancient. These have always been held in the greatest esteem by the Jews, and are therefore quoted as the best authorities for the genuine sense of the prophecy. To these I may add the name of the learned Grotius, of the sixteenth century, who, in speaking of those interpretations among the modern Jews, which differ from the Christian translation, condemns them in toto, and says, "away then, with the modern fictions of the Jews."

Having therefore shown from the highest authority that the correct application of this prophecy refers us to Christ; we may now open our eyes to the evidence of its fulfilment. That the Jews are scattered throughout the whole world, without any distinct government which they can call their own, and without being able even to mark the distinction of their tribes, is a fact too well authenticated, and too generally known, to require any arguments for its defence. It is now utterly impossible for the Jews themselves to determine from which of the tribes they have descended, since they have, during their long dispersion, and the violent persecutions which they have suffered, intermarried with each other, until the identity of their tribes is entirely lost. And from the period of their overthrow by the Romans, for the term of more than 1700 years, they have been subjected to foreign masters, and live as aliens, even in their own native Palestine.

Surely then, the sceptre has departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet. The promised and predicted Shiloh has come; whose birth, life, character, death, resurrection and ascension, was sung by many of the ancient prophets, and has been emblazoned from the faithful pages of modern history.

I shall now call your attention to some of the prophetic denunciations of Moses, which are of a most singular and astonishing character; and whose fulfilment must defy the power of reason to indulge a single rational doubt of the inspiration of him who announced them to the descendants of Israel.

In Deuteronomy xxviii. 62, 63, the prophet declares to the Jews—"Ye shall be few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude,—and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it."

This is truly a most astonishing prophecy, and its singularity renders it worthy of particular observation. When it was pronounced, the Israelites had not entered into the promised land, nor had they any inheritance among the nations. It embraces the certainty of their entering upon the possession of Canaan, and foretells that they would be reduced from a vast and innumerable multitude, to *few in number*, and be removed from that land by their invading enemies.

Moses, as a powerful and successful legislator, stakes his reputation upon the truth of these prophecies: The question therefore is, *have they received a literal fulfilment?*—If they have, his prophetic inspiration is established. That they have been literally plucked from off the land which they went to possess, is clearly proved by the history of their captivities, as well as their present dispersion throughout the globe. I must here advert to what has already been laid before you: namely,—that the ten tribes have never returned from the

captivity into which they were carried by the king of Assyria: But a scanty portion of them ever returned from the Babylonish captivity; and finally, the work of their entire removal, as a nation, was effectually completed by the Romans.

Since that period, their country has been constantly in possession of foreign lords and masters, entirely out of the possession, and removed from the control of the Jews. Indeed, there are and have been but few of the Jews remaining in Palestine since their overthrow, and these, of the poorer sort. In the twelfth century, a celebrated Jew of Tudela in Spain, distinguished by the appellation of Rabbi Benjamin, travelled into almost all parts of the civilized world to examine the synagogues and ceremonies of his nation, and to inform himself of the exact condition of his brethren. He tells us that Jerusalem was almost entirely abandoned by the Jews; that there were not more than 200 of them to be found there, and these, mostly dyers of wool, the monopoly of which trade they purchased from year to year. These, he tells us, all lived together in David's tower, making very little figure, and exciting as little notice. In other parts of the country he found one or two in a city;—in some twenty, and in others, none. Sandy, in his travels, speaking of the land of Palestine, says, "It is for the most part inhabited by Moors and Arabians; those possessing the valleys, and these the mountains. Turks, there be a few; but many Greeks with other christians of all sects and nations, such as impute to the place an adherent holiness. Here be also some Jews, yet inherit they no part of the land, but in their own country do live as aliens." Thus you see, my hearers, how exactly the prophecy has been fulfilled, which declared to the tribes of Jacob, that they should be *plucked from off the land* which they were going to possess.

Another part of this prophecy announced that they should become *few in number*, though they were

previously to be multiplied as the stars of heaven.

Passing over the numerous wars by which the Jewish ranks were thinned from time to time, this prophecy was literally verified in the memorable siege of Jerusalem, when it was invested by Titus; and when, as Josephus expresses it, *an infinite multitude perished*. He computes the number that perished by sword and famine, at *eleven hundred thousand*! This otherwise incredible number, can readily be accounted for, since the Jews were assembled from all parts to celebrate the passover, at Jerusalem.

Basnage, in his history of the Jews, furnishes an account of *one million, three hundred and thirty-nine thousand, six hundred and ninety* persons, that were destroyed in the city of Jerusalem and other parts of Judea, besides *ninety-nine thousand two hundred*, taken prisoners. These facts he has collected from the accounts of Josephus. In these historical facts you plainly see the fulfilment of the prophecy which foretold the astonishing reduction of the vast multitudes of the Jews to "*few in number*."

The learned historian to whom I have alluded; when speaking of the prophecies concerning their dispersion, their sufferings, and their miraculous preservation as a distinct and separate people, whose history abounds with massacres and persecutions, uses the following language concerning them—"Here," says he, "is also another circumstance which heightens this prodigy. This forlorn and persecuted nation can scarcely find one place in the universe to rest their heads, or to set their feet in. They have waded through floods of their own blood, and are as yet preserved. That infinite number of *Jews*, murdered through a cruel and barbarous zeal, weakened, but did not destroy that nation. For notwithstanding the joint persecutions of Christians and Idolators, who designed their ruin, they are still in being." And may I not with the fullest confidence add, that had not God pledged to them his protection, they must, even the whole race of them, long

ere this, have been exterminated from the face of the globe. Well may we exclaim in the language of Basnage, "What a marvellous thing it is, that after so many wars, battles, and sieges; after so many rebellions, massacres and persecutions; after so many years of captivity, slavery and misery, they are not *destroyed utterly*; and though scattered among all people, yet subsist as a distinct people by themselves; where is there any thing comparable to this to be found in all the histories, and in all the nations under the sun?"

After announcing to them the prophecy, that they should be "scattered among all nations," Moses proceeds to tell them, Deut. xxviii. 64—66—"And there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, *even wood and stone*. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life."

Here Moses predicts that they should serve other gods, which were unknown to them or their fathers, "*even wood and stone*." This prediction has been exactly fulfilled, during their last, long and oppressive captivity; for the Jews of Spain, and other Catholic countries, have been compelled to submit to the idolatrous rites of the church of Rome, and bow down to stocks and stones, to prevent having their property confiscated and their persons murdered by the Inquisition. This, according to Levi's dissertations upon the prophecies, (vol. i. page 18,) was the cause which led multitudes to apostatize from the Jewish religion and adopt the forms and worship of the church of Rome, with all the adoration which was paid to senseless images.

Again, Moses tells them that *they shall find no ease, neither rest for the soles of their feet*. On this clause, it



is proper to remark, that the prediction has been abundantly verified : for they have suffered banishment from place to place, and from country to country, so often, that they have constantly hung in doubt respecting any permanent location. In some places, they have been banished, then recalled, and then banished again. According to Basnage, they were banished from England about the close of the thirteenth century, and were not permitted to return again till the reign of Charles the Second, or the days of Oliver Cromwell. Near the close of the fifteenth century, they were banished from Spain, by Ferdinand and Isabella ; and according to Mariana, there were 70,000 families, or about 800,000 persons, who left Spain in consequence of this edict. These Jews were received in Portugal, by John II. who made them pay dearly for a refuge. By Emanuel, his successor, they were shortly after banished. This prince shamefully violated his faith, and outraged every principle of humanity by depriving them of the privilege of carrying their children with them, which were under fourteen years of age.— This reduced the Jews to such a state of despair, that some of them killed themselves, and others became the executioners of their own children.

With the prophetic vision of these inhuman oppressions, well might Moses declare, Deut. xxviii. 29, 32, "*that they should be oppressed and spoiled evermore, and that their sons and daughters should be given to another people.*" These predictions have been fulfilled in several countries, but more especially in Spain and Portugal, where they were very numerous in former ages. Here their children were taken from them by order of government, that they might be educated in conformity with the Roman Catholic creed. The fourth council of Toledo, in Spain, ordered that all the Jewish children should be taken from their parents and shut up in monasteries to be instructed in what was then termed *the christian truths*.

Their *oppressions*, of which mention is made in this prophecy, have been without a parallel in the history of all nations. How often has their valuable property been seized, and their coffers drained, to supply the necessities of the state, or to pamper the luxury and extravagance of a British prince. They have been fined and fleeced by different governments, and forced to redeem their wretched lives by extravagant sums of money, extorted from them by the most cruel sufferings! Kennet, the English historian, says that Henry III. "always polled the Jews at every low ebb of his fortunes. One Abraham, who was found delinquent, was forced to pay seven hundred marks for his ransom. Aaron, another Jew, protested that the king had taken from him at times, thirty thousand marks of silver, and two hundred marks of gold, which he had presented to the queen."

Another respectable historian\* informs us, that in the year 1240, the king attempted to fleece the Jews to the utmost extent. That he "commanded *all* the Jews of both sexes throughout *England*, to be imprisoned, till they would make a discovery of their wealth; which he appointed officers to receive in every county, and return to his *Exchequer*. Many of them, no doubt, pleaded poverty, or pretended to have given up all: but as the *tyrant* was in earnest to have their last farthing, he extorted it by the most cruel torments."

Stow asserts that the generality of these sufferers had one eye put out; while Matthew Paris informs his readers, that from a single individual Jew at Bristol, the king demanded no less than ten thousand marks of silver. This was resolutely denied, and the king ordered that one of his large teeth should be extracted daily, till he complied with the demand. He had the courage to sustain *seven* operations, when his sufferings overcame his resolution, and he ransomed the remainder of his teeth by

\*See *Anglia Judaica*, page 70.

the sum demanded. Thus, at every step we advance, we behold new demonstrations of the fulfilment of the prophecies of Moses.

In the 34th verse of the chapter from which we have quoted these predictions, Moses declares to the Jews—"Thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see." And my brethren, we have already seen, to what desperation the Jews were reduced, when their children were torn from their embraces, and themselves compelled to wander in cruel banishment. In their madness and phrenzy they have destroyed their wives, their children, and their own lives ! Josephus informs us that after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army, some of the Jews retired for refuge to the castle of Nasada ; and being closely besieged by the conquerors, they were persuaded by their leader (*Eleazer*) first to murder their wives and children ; and that they then chose ten men by lot to slay all the rest : and when this was accomplished, they appointed one of the ten to kill the other nine in like manner. When he had performed his bloody deed, he finished the tragedy by stabbing himself ! This historian tells us that nine hundred and sixty perished in this awful manner. Nor is this a solitary instance of such phrenzy and madness ; for in the reign of Richard I. the populace rose in arms to make a general massacre of the Jews. About fifteen hundred of them, according to Basinge, retired into York castle, where they were closely besieged. They offered to capitulate, and ransom their lives with money. Their offer was refused : when one of them in the madness of despair, cried "*it is better to die courageously for the law, than to fall into the hands of the Christians.*" In this despair, each seized his knife and slaughtered his wife and children. The men then retired into the king's palace and set it on fire, and consumed themselves, with the palace and furniture !

I might continue to recite the prophecies of Mo-

ses, with the history of their exact and literal fulfilment, till I should swell this discourse to a volume ; but I must forbear. Omitting a particular notice of the prophecies which assured them that *women should slay and eat their own children*, when their walled cities should be closely besieged by their enemies, and its fulfilment in the memorable siege of Jerusalem—the assurance that they should become *a proverb and a by-word among all nations*, and its extensive and universal fulfilment, even to the present day ; as well as numerous other predictions of this celebrated Lawgiver ; I shall hasten to consider *one*, and but one more, of the astonishing predictions of Moses.

The prophecy to which I allude, has justly excited the wonder of every reflecting and serious mind, and stands forth as an imperishable monument of the divine inspiration of this prophet. It is recorded in Deut. xxviii. 68—“ And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again, in ships ; by the way whereof I spake unto thee, thou shalt see it no more again : and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bond-men and bond-women, and no man shall buy you.”

How striking is the contrast here presented ! But a short time before, they had left Egypt in triumph : But now he tells them that they should again be carried back, not by the way of the wilderness, but in ships, to be sold for slaves, to their ancient enemies, till none should be found to purchase them ! This prediction, as strange as it may appear, was literally and fully accomplished : For in the antiquities of the Jews, book xii. and chapter *first*, Josephus informs us, that “ in the reign of the two first Ptolemies, a great number of Jews were slaves in Egypt. And when Jerusalem was taken by Titus, he sent many of them captives, who were above seventeen years of age, bound to the works in Egypt : those under seventeen, were sold ; but so little care was taken of these captives, that *eleven thousand* of them perished for want. The markets were so over-

stocked with them, that (as this author tells us elsewhere) *the Jews* with their wives and children, were sold at the lowest price." After their last overthrow, by Adrian, Josephus informs us that many thousands of them were sold; and those that could not be disposed of at home, were transported in ships to Egypt. Many perished by shipwreck and famine, multitudes were sold as slaves, till no purchasers could be found, and the remainder were massacred by the inhabitants!

Such, my hearers, are the manifest proofs of the prophecies of Moses—prophecies which were uttered more than 3000 years ago, and which stand without a single parallel in the annals of all ages.

The clear and lucid evidence of their minute fulfilment, cannot fail to inspire the candid mind with astonishment, and fill the heart with the most profound reverence for the power, the majesty, and the faithfulness of God. The minuteness with which these prophecies have been fulfilled, has disarmed some of the boldest of skeptics, and enraged the more ignorant and headstrong, who have given vent to their ungenerous spleen and their wounded pride, by unmanly satire and childish ridicule; which has excited the blush of reason and philosophy, and called forth the tear of generous pity and compassion. These prophecies, however, and their entire fulfilment, present a barrier, against which the foaming waves of skepticism will ever rage in vain. They challenge the power of all the enemies of revelation to contradict their truth, and defy the entire host of unbelievers to shake their imperishable foundations.

And now, my hearers, what does the skeptic offer against the prophetic inspiration of Moses, to justify your reason in rejecting his testimony? Does he prove by history, that the facts predicted did not transpire? He dare not pretend this. Does he show you that divine inspiration is absurd and impossible? *So far from this*, he is constrained to admit, what

he dare not deny, that a revelation *is possible*. What then does he offer to justify his own unbelief, and persuade you to reject the testimony of Moses? Why, he simply proposes a few childish objections, backed with volleys of abuse and ridicule! And does he flatter himself that your sober judgment is thus to be trifled with? I trust that such pretenders to reason and philosophy will find themselves for once mistaken, and be compelled to abandon their vain and delusive attempt.

Let us now notice a few of their objections.—They tell us that Moses wrote many of his prophecies in the preter or past tense, and therefore is undeserving of credit. And does this method of employing language destroy the credibility of a prophet? The very suggestion is the monster of absurdity: for who does not know that from time immemorial, predictions and promises that are prophetic, have been given in the preter tense, to impress the mind of man with the certainty of their truth and divine authority? And do we not see the fulfilment of such prediction, ages after they were uttered?

Again,—we are told that Moses must have been an imposter, because the books ascribed to him contain an account of his own death. And would this fact prove that he was not an inspired prophet? certainly not, unless it could be shown that he did not die at the time, and in the manner there set forth: Where then is the mighty strength and cogency of the objection? Have skeptics ever attempted to prove that the facts alleged were untrue?—No, nor will they attempt to do this. But do they not know, (and if they do not, it is civility in us to inform them,) that both Jewish and Christian writers have always believed and maintained, that the Pentateuch was finished by another hand; probably by Joshua; and that many remarks concerning Moses were probably inserted by the compiler of his Manuscript? Why then do they urge such puerile objections!—Alas, it is for the want of more solid objections and arguments.

Once more,—we are told that Moses pretends to have been commissioned to direct the warriors of Israel to fall upon whole cities and tribes of their enemies, and to exterminate men, women and children! And this is presumed to be sufficient to invalidate all his pretensions to divine inspiration. And is this so powerful an objection as to disprove the fact that Moses penned the most astonishing predictions, and that these predictions, which were totally unauthorized by any precedent in the history of man, were a tissue of deception and falsehood, notwithstanding their exact and literal fulfilment, merely because Moses asserts that such injunctions were imposed by divine authority? Would not the evident fulfilment of his prophecies, on the other hand, furnish undeniable proof of the divine authority of what he commanded?

What is there, we ask, in this account, that is so unlike the scenes which we daily meet, in contemplating the character of the God of nature? Deists acknowledge that God governs both the natural and moral world; and are there no sufferings, no destructions of men, women and children; no wild tornadoes; no unsparing earthquakes; no sweeping pestilences, depopulating kingdoms, and laying waste the fairest portions of the globe?—Have there been no wars of extermination, but among the Hebrews? That such wars have been far more numerous among the heathen, will not be denied by any historian, nor by any attentive reader of history: And why has not the God of nature interposed his power to prevent them, if they were subversive of the great designs of his government? If he did not design their existence, he certainly could have prevented their occurrence; and as he did not prevent them by his powerful interposition, it must be conceded by every consistent Deist, that he has permitted them for some great and wise purpose, which is too deep for human penetration to fathom. Here you discover, *my hearers*, that the Deist himself is under the ne-

cessity of appealing to the mystery of an inscrutable Providence, to sustain and justify the character of the God of nature: He pleads that it must be for some wise and great end, which, were it fully unfolded to our view, would furnish an ample vindication of the wisdom, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator. With this vindication, we have no disposition to find fault; for our opponents, in this, appear like men of reason. It is a happy circumstance, however, that we are under no such necessity of appealing to mystery, in vindicating the justice and wisdom of God, in the case which this objection embraces; for an ample reason is assigned by the testimony itself.

And I beg leave here to remark, that the Jews were not permitted to slay women and children, on any occasion, in a war with foreign nations; nor any except such as were found in arms against them, even of the men. To the seven Canaanitish nations, they were expressly commanded to tender the olive of peace; and in case this offer was accepted, they were bound to spare their lives and treat them with humanity. But in case they refused to accept the offer of peace, and agree to abstain from the practice of idolatry, the Jews were then permitted to wage against them an exterminating war. For this permission, a reason is assigned in the very connexion where the permission is found. See Exo. xx. 18. 'That they teach you not to do after their abominations, which they have done unto their gods, so should ye sin against the Lord your God.' When we reflect that these Canaanitish nations were in the habit of offering their children in sacrifice to false gods, can it be a matter of surprise that the Jews should be made the instruments of their overthrow, as a token of the divine displeasure, any more than that God should overthrow and destroy the ante-deluvian world, by a general deluge? Or, that he should destroy the cities of the plain by fire, for their wickedness? Where, in the name of reason, is the dif-



ference, except it be, that by destroying these incorrigible idolators by the instrumentality of the Israelites, their land and habitations would be left for another and less abominable race of men? Had the idolatrous females of these Canaanitish nations, no participation in the abominable and cruel rites of Paganism? Did they not seduce the men of Israel, by their artful intrigues, into the snares of their abominations? And were they not the means of bringing some of the greatest calamities upon the Jews? And pray, by what principle of philosophy and reason, is idolatry rendered innocent in females, and at the same time, a crime of the blackest die in men? There are other reasons given by the historian, which modesty compels us to pass in silence, but which confirm the justice of their punishment. Now, had the children of these nations been preserved, does not reason tell us that they would have sought to revenge the death of their ancestors? Or if they had been spared, and not fed and nourished by the Israelites, would they not have suffered incomparably more than they did by an instantaneous overthrow? And again, what is the mighty difference between a destruction of fire, water, or an earthquake, provided these engines be employed by the Deity for that purpose, and an army of men, employed by the same independent agency, for the same end? For we have already shown that the Deity could have prevented any such events if he chose; and it therefore follows, that he either intended them, or was indifferent about the events. But the supposition of indifference, is a virtual denial of his government of the world. To avoid this conclusion, we are told that men are *free agents*; and therefore left to destroy whole nations, contrary to the design of God? We reply—they are not the authors of their agency, and the Being who gave them this agency must have known what effects it would produce; if it were therefore liable to frustrate any of his designs, the gift itself would be *indicative of infinite folly and weakness*.

The only consistent view which we can take of this subject, is, that the Deity, designing to establish the true worship of his name, in opposition to the universal prevalence of idolatry, adopted such means as would tend to fix, in the minds of men, the most solemn dread of his power to punish and destroy such as should oppose his worship and deny his authority. And that such an effect was produced, both upon the Israelites, and the surrounding nations, by the signal displays of his judgments, in the days of Moses and Joshua, must appear evident to every attentive reader of their history.

I have devoted eight lectures to the consideration of some of the most interesting parts of the Pentateuch, and have found the historical facts there recorded, amply supported by profane authority.—Two lectures have been devoted to prove by history, the prophetic inspiration of Moses. The object has been accomplished, if the most respectable historians are worthy of credit. If our opposers are still determined to shut their eyes against these evidences; to deny and ridicule the plainest facts of revelation; to brand the whole with disdainful epithets; to pronounce and *denounce* these facts as preposterous, absurd and impossible; we demand of them, what *tangible* or *historical* evidence they have to justify their bold denial of the truth of these books? They have none, nor dare they pretend it. They may rage, and ridicule, and condemn the Bible, but they will never attempt to offer us such evidence to justify their unbelief, as we have produced in support of the writings of Moses.

There are other objections which have been employed by skeptical writers, but they have been fairly met and answered by numerous authors, who have written in defence of revealed religion; I shall therefore forbear to detain you by their recital or their refutation. Weigh this subject with candor, my brethren, and may divine wisdom direct you in the path of judgment and truth.

## LECTURE X.

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ACTS xxvi. 27.

“Believest thou the prophets?”

The divine inspiration of the prophets, has been believed and defended by the Jews, without any intermission, from the days of Moses, till the period of our Saviour's ministry; and by Jews and Christians from the days of Christ and his Apostles, down to the present generation. A prophet is one who foretels events by means of supernatural instruction, which no human foresight could embrace or unfold. When we speak of a true prophet, therefore, we mean to exhibit a character to whom the Deity has revealed something which is to transpire at a period or periods after such a revelation is made. The act of prophecying, is nothing more nor less than simply declaring such truths as God has revealed.

Two kinds of evidence are afforded, by which a real prophet may be infallibly known. The one is, the accurate fulfilment of his predictions; and the other, that he should openly perform such miracles as to demonstrate that the power of God resides with him, to shield him from all just suspicion of falsehood or fraud.

That kind of evidence to which there appears to be the least objection in the judgment of a majority of mankind, is the literal fulfilment of the prediction. We have already produced an abundance of this kind of evidence, to prove that Moses was a true prophet of God. Predictions of the most astonishing character which he uttered, have been fulfilling from the memorable period of his death, to the present hour. It is not always the case, however, *that a prophecy is immediately fulfilled: hence a*

true prophet might be the subject of unwelcome suspicion for a long time, unless a different kind of evidence were afforded.—But the prophet whose writings we have been considering, was evidently gifted with miraculous powers.

The miracles which he performed in Egypt, by which the haughty oppressors of the house of Israel were punished, and the deliverance of the Jewish nation was effected, are a standing monument of his inspiration: For we have before seen (as was proved in the fourth lecture of this course) that the Jewish account of the plagues of Egypt is corroborated by the testimony of heathen historians. These miracles were of a most astonishing character, and such as to humble the heart of a most oppressive and haughty tyrant, who had proudly defied the power and authority of the Most High.

But I shall doubtless be reminded that the magicians of Egypt performed some of these wonders of the recorded plagues, which are set down as miracles, and that this fact is sufficient to expose the whole account as a mere fiction. I can see no force, however, in this conclusion; for as it was the avowed purpose of God to harden Pharaoh's heart, as a means of displaying his own power, and of bringing this monarch into a condition to receive the full measure of punishment which he intended to inflict; it must be obvious to every reflecting mind, that no method could have been so effectual in securing the end, as that of permitting these magicians to produce a *few* of the same effects which were produced by the instrumentality of Moses. This circumstance gave occasion for still greater displays of divine power, till even the magicians were constrained to confess the hand of God in what they beheld, as well as to acknowledge their own inability to perform such wonders. Thus the purpose of God was accomplished in the punishment of the Egyptians, and the triumphant departure of the children of Israel rendered an evidence of infinite impor-

tance to establish the conviction of unchanging faithfulness in all the promises of God.

Many of the miracles which these plagues afforded, are altogether unlike any others which have ever been performed in any age of the world: Such as turning the waters of Egypt into blood: the *lice*, the *flies*, the mortal *pestilence*; the tremendous *storms*; the three days of *thick darkness*, and the *death* of all the *first born* of the Egyptians on the same night! And what rendered them still more striking and worthy of credit, was that Moses, when entreated by Pharaoh, marked the precise time in which they should be removed. So evidently was the hand of God in these miracles, that all doubt was removed from the minds of the Egyptians, and the children of Israel were urged to depart in the utmost haste, through fear that the whole Egyptian people would be consumed as a punishment for their detention. Nor does it appear that the Israelites ever doubted the power of God in the wonders which were there performed. Indeed, so thoroughly impressed were that people with the conviction of the miraculous interposition of Heaven, in these plagues, for their deliverance from the house of bondage, that one, and the last, which preceded their departure from Egypt, gave rise to one of the principal festivals, which has been celebrated by the Jews from that period to the present day.

The feast of the *passover*, which has always been celebrated by the Jewish nation with the greatest solemnity, on each returning year, by sprinkling the blood of the *paschal lamb* upon the posts and lintels of their doors, was instituted in commemoration of the miraculous preservation of all their tribes and families, on the memorable night in which all the *first born* of the Egyptians was slain by the destroying angel. Upon the event of this same miraculous deliverance, the redemption of the *first born* of all the Jews has also been observed through every succeeding age. Thus we see that the Jews were con-

tinually reminded of their degraded condition, as bond-men and bond-women, in Egyptian slavery, and the interposition of divine power for their emancipation.

I will advert to one, and only one more of those miracles which confirm and establish the divine inspiration of this prophet. Fifty days after the memorable era of their departure out of Egypt, they were permitted to witness the demonstrations of the inspiration of their leader. Moses had informed them that the glory of God would be displayed in a most astonishing manner, in delivering to them the statutes and commandments of his wisdom. He had received the assurance of such a manifestation, in the following language—"And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever."—Exod. xix. 9.

The fulfilment of this promise was an event so wonderful, and afforded so clear a demonstration of his divine mission, that Moses exclaimed, "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been *any such thing* as this great thing *is*, or hath been heard like it? Did *ever* people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?"—Deut. iv. 32, 33. The acknowledged fulfilment of this promise is recorded in the fifth chapter, 24th, 25th and 26th verses—"And they said, Behold, the Lord our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, we shall die. For who *is there of* all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived?" They therefore,

earnestly entreated Moses, saying, verse 27th, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say : and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee ; and we will hear *it*, and do *it*."

Here I beg leave to remark, that the feast of Pentecost was instituted in commemoration of this wonderful event ; and the anniversary festival of that astonishing revelation of the law of God, was punctually observed through all ages, till the final overthrow of both the nation and government of the Jews. Now let us ask the opposers of revelation, who demand a reason for our belief, what reason they can offer to justify themselves in rejecting the facts here laid down ? They cannot pretend the want of a sufficient number of witnesses to establish its credibility ; for it appears that the number who witnessed this glorious display, was about 600,000 men, besides women and children ! And pray, was the whole nation composed of knaves, or rather the most stupid idiots, that they should become the dupes of a most barefaced imposture ? Or if it were no more than a mere artifice and a sham, is there the least reason to suppose, that out of more than a million of adults, there was not so much as *one* honest and *independent* man to expose so ridiculous and wicked a falsehood ? And how can our opposers reconcile the fact, that a whole nation, from that memorable period, received and acknowledged the law of Moses as divine authority, without the least apparent variation, and were ready on all occasions, to die in its defence ? From such an absurd conclusion, reason turns away in disgust, and common sense blushes to record the weakness of such inconsistency. We can scarcely believe it possible that any intelligent man ever perused the history of these wonderful events, and weighed, in his own mind, the evidences of their truth, without feeling a secret and irresistible conviction that the prophet *Moses* was divinely commissioned and inspired by.

the Creator. And I frankly confess my astonishment at the weak credulity of those, who, in opposition, to all rational and historical evidence, can have the temerity to assert, that they believe the whole account to be fabulous: for this is nothing less than believing, not only *without* evidence, but *against all the evidence* which appears so conclusive to every well-informed and unprejudiced mind. As christians, we are not at liberty to believe any proposition without evidence; but in this respect, skeptics have gone far beyond our limits; for they profess to believe the Bible *untrue*, not only *without*, but in direct opposition to the strongest evidence which history has recorded! We shall, however, be justified, if we express our doubts, either of their sincerity, or the soundness of their judgment. For we challenge any man to produce such clear and substantial proof of any ancient historical fact, as that which has been adduced in support of the divine legation of Moses.

Having, as we believe, produced sufficient evidence to establish the truth and divine authority of the writings of Moses, which have been the subject of several Lectures, I shall pass, briefly to show, that the prophetic writings of the Old Testament are so identified with the history of the Jews, that they cannot be overthrown without destroying their history.

I have deemed it important to bestow a greater share of labor on the *five first* books of the Bible, on account of the remote period in which they were written, and because all the later writers of scripture appeal to them as the original authority for their religious faith : And I cannot but esteem it as an evidence of great importance to the authenticity of these books, that all the Jews of every sect, besides the Samaritans, together with Mahometans and christians, have, in every age since their existence, united in the most undoubted belief of their truth and divine authority. Indeed, it appears ut-



terly impossible to account for the conduct of the Jewish nation in submitting to the laws and ordinances of the Pentateuch, unless they were accompanied with the clearest demonstrations of divine power. Pagan writers of the highest antiquity have also preserved many of the great and interesting facts recorded in the Pentateuch, and handed them down to posterity—and notwithstanding they have often disguised and blended them with extravagant fables, still enough remains to convince the careful and intelligent reader that they must have been drawn from the writings of Moses. Nay, we have seen that several of them have acknowledged the authorship of Moses, and have quoted both the law and historical facts which he recorded, in many important particulars. I shall therefore submit the question to the decision of your sober reason, whether it does not require the most astonishing and unreasonable credulity, for any man to believe that an ample code of the most rigid laws, requiring numerous expensive sacrifices and ceremonies; all claiming to be founded upon the open display of miraculous power, in the presence of millions, was received and credited in such a manner as to become the standing law of a whole nation through all ages, if no such miracles were ever performed? And whether those who affect to believe that the writings of Moses are made up of fabulous imposture, do not in reality exceed the most shameful examples of ignorant credulity to which they can point us in all the pages of Jewish and christian history!

I must here pass to notice some of the most important predictions of other prophets, whose names are handed down to us by the scriptures of the Old Testament: But in doing this it will be unnecessary to speak of any except such as hold a conspicuous place in the historical records of the Jews. Before we proceed to any particular designation, it is expedient to remind you, my hearers, that it was a *crime*, for which the Jewish law ordained the pun-

ishment of death, for any man to pretend to the gift of prophecy, if he was detected as a false prophet: Therefore, every one who pretended to such inspiration, must either openly perform a miracle, or wait till the event of his prophecy had fully and clearly tested his claim to that high and honorable office.

It may be proper here to give the names of such prophets as were principally esteemed, and recorded in Jewish history, with the periods of their death, by which it will appear that they were raised up in that nation at the very time when their eminent services were most needed to check the ambition of kings, and to prevent the universal corruption of divine truth and divine worship. The catalogue which I shall present to you, commenced about the period when the Jews began to be dissatisfied with the government of the Judges, and discovered an unconquerable propensity to imitate the neighboring nations, by setting apart a king to reign over them.

The prophet who was then raised up, admonished them of the danger to which they would be exposed, and predicted that the kingdom would soon be rent from Saul, and transferred to David. This prophet was Samuel, who died about 1057 years before Christ. The next was David, king of Israel, who died 1015—Elijah, 895—Elisha, 830—Amos, 785—Jonah, 784—Hosea, 725—Micah, 699—Isaiah and Nahum, 698—Joel, 660—Zepheniah, 609—Habakkuk, 598—Jeremiah, 586—Obadiah, 583—Ezekiel, 536—Daniel, 534—Haggai and Zechariah, 518 Malachi, 420.

It is worthy of special notice, that from the time of the Judges, to the close of the Babylonish captivity, when the Jews were effectually weaned from the sin of idolatry, the number of prophets far exceeded that of any other period of equal length; and it clearly displays the wisdom of God, in providing such guards, and effectual barriers, against the wide

spread corruptions and idolatries which marked the reign of many of their kings. Previous to the time of these kings, the names of Joshua, Gideon, Barack, Sampson, and Jephthah, are mentioned as persons to whom divine communications were made from time to time, and who occasionally officiated in the character of prophets. Indeed, the acts and predictions of these prophets, together with the fulfilment of what they foretold, is so interwoven with, and occupies so large a portion of the Jewish history, from the days of Moses, till about four hundred years before the birth of Christ, that it would be impossible to make a separation, without destroying, or at least, without rendering that history entirely useless.

The prophecies of the Old Testament were totally different from all the oracles of the heathen.—They were delivered without solicitation, and publicly pronounced before multitudes; not in doubtful and ambiguous terms, but generally in a plain and explicit manner, so as to be easily understood by all classes. Nay, more; they were generally written at length, and exposed to the inspection of all such as had the curiosity to examine what they foretold. By this means, all frauds could readily be detected, and every man could judge of them by their fulfilment. Not so with pagan oracles: Questions had to be proposed, their answers demanded, and these responses were always conveyed in language highly ambiguous; so that let the event prove as it might, there was always left ample room for evasion, should the charge of falsehood be preferred. In addition to this, the responses were always given in secret, and the books containing the mysteries of their religion were always concealed from the multitude.

With these remarks concerning the character of Jewish prophecy, we shall hasten to notice a few of the predictions of some of the principal prophets of *olden time*, and their plain and literal fulfilment.

About 742 years before Christ, Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, entered into a confederacy against Ahaz, king of Judah. This monarch was greatly distressed, lest the kingdom of Judah should be absolutely destroyed. At this alarming crisis, the prophet Isaiah was sent to Ahaz, and in a public manner assured him that the enterprise should be frustrated, and that these confederate kings should both die in a short time; that before a child, which should be born in about ten months, should be able to say, "My father and my mother," the capitals of Syria and Israel, namely, Damascus and Samaria, should both be subjected to the king of Assyria. This prediction was literally fulfilled within the space of *three years*; as may be seen by consulting Isaiah, 7th and 8th chapters, and II. Kings xv. 29, 30, xvi. 29. The destruction of the army of Sennecherib was also accurately foretold by this prophet. Again, we are apprised, that after the departure of the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, to whom Hezekiah had disclosed his treasures, this same prophet was commissioned to assure the Jewish monarch, that all his treasures should be conveyed to Babylon; and that the princes descending from him, should become menial servants. Isaiah, xxxix. 5-7. II. Kings, xx. At the time this prediction was uttered, the kings of Judah and Babylon were allies; yet it was literally accomplished soon after, when the Jews were carried captive to Babylon.

The overthrow of the Babylonian monarch, and the name of the military chieftain, Cyrus, by whom it should be effected, were mentioned by Isaiah, more than *one hundred years* before he was born, as well as the return of the Jewish captivity. See Isaiah, 45th chapter. The entire destruction of the city of Babylon, was also foretold by this prophet, so that its ancient site should be lost; and that with such precision, that his character, as a true prophet of God, was never after doubted by the Jews. For

this prophecy, and its literal fulfilment, you are invited to consult Isaiah, 13th, 14th and 47th chapters, and the history of Josephus ; with numerous other accounts of more modern travellers.

Another prophet predicted the reign of Josiah, calling him by name more than three hundred years before his birth, and confirmed the prediction of what he should perform, by two astonishing miracles. This prediction was literally fulfilled, as may be seen by comparing the prophecy with the history—I. Kings, xiii. chapter, and II. of Kings, xxiii. chapter.

Isaiah predicted the entire discontinuance of idolatry among the Jews, ii. chap. 18, 21, and which was literally effected within two hundred years, by the sufferings of the Babylonish captivity. This prophet also foretold the general distress and ruin that should be brought upon the Jews for their wickedness, which overtook them within two hundred years, as may be seen, Isa. iii. 1, 14, and II. Chronicles, xxxvi. chap. In addition to all these predictions, Isaiah announced that a few of the poorer sort should be left to cultivate the land of Israel, during the Babylonish captivity, which was also fully accomplished.

Jeremiah anticipated by prophecy the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar, with the certain captivity of the Jews, in such a remarkable manner, that it became notorious to all the neighboring nations: For he accompanied his language by visible signs; and sent bonds and yokes "to the kings of Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, Tyre and Sidon, by the hand of the messengers which came to Jerusalem (from these kings) unto Zedekiah, king of Judah;" and distinctly foretold, "that all these nations should serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his son's son." See chap. xxvii. 3—7. For this pointed prophecy, the Jews cast him into prison, where he remained till Nebuchadnezzar took the city of Jerusalem and *set him at liberty*. See chap. xxxix. 11—14. Jer-

emiah was contradicted and opposed by several false prophets, whose flattering predictions and deceitful delusions persuaded the people that no evil should befall them. Upon this, Jeremiah prophesied that Hannaniah, one of these false prophets, should die, that same year, and that Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah should be taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, and slain in sight of the people of Judah, and their bodies roasted in the fire. For the fulfilment of these predictions, as to time, manner and place, you have only to consult chap. xxviii. 16, 17. xxix. 21, 22. By the exact and speedy fulfilment of these singular predictions, the prophetic inspiration of this venerable seer was so clearly and fully established, as never afterwards to be doubted by his countrymen.

One strange prediction of this prophet, and which for a time was thought to contradict the prophecy of Ezekiel, was that concerning the death of the Jewish king, Zedekiah. Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem, at the same time in which Ezekiel prophesied in Babylon, and concerning the same events. The prophecies of Jeremiah were sent to the captives in Babylon, and those of Ezekiel to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In their prophecies concerning the captivity and death of Zedekiah, they embraced the most minute circumstances in such a manner, that they were thought to contradict each other; by this seeming disparity, the attention of the multitude was excited to mark the fulfilment of their prophecies. Compare Jer. xxxiv. 2—7. and Ezek. xii. 13. Jeremiah announced that he should see the king of Babylon and be carried to Babylon: Ezekiel declared that he should not see Babylon: Jeremiah announced that he should die in peace and be buried after the manner of his ancestors: Ezekiel prophesied that he should die a captive in Babylon. Now these apparent discrepancies are all perfectly harmonized in the literal fulfilment of every particular part: for in the first place, Zed-

ekiah saw the king of Babylon, who commanded that his eyes should be put out before he was carried to Babylon: In the next place, he died in Babylon, in peace, upon his bed, and was allowed the funeral solemnities which it had been customary to observe for the former kings of Judah. See Jer. xxxix. 4—7. II. Kings, xxv. 6—7. Thus both their predictions, which before were thought to be at variance, were so fully and minutely fulfilled in every particular, that the Jews felt the strongest confidence that these prophets were both divinely inspired by the unerring wisdom of Heaven.

While the prophet Ezekiel was a captive in the land of the Chaldeans, he prophesied that those of his countrymen who were left in Judea should suffer the most severe chastisements for their wickedness: he announced that one third of them should die by pestilence and famine; that another third should fall by the sword, and that those who remained should be scattered to the four winds, and that even in their dispersion, a sword should follow them! And only a few years elapsed before all these evils overtook them, according to the literal import of the prediction, and were inflicted by the instrumentality of the Chaldeans. The evidence of these facts may be seen by consulting Ezekiel, fifth and eighth chapters, and Prideaux's *Connexions*, vol. i. pages 80—84, 8th edition.

The manner in which the Jewish temple should be profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes, as well as the death of that headstrong prince, together with a description of his temper, and even the peculiar countenance by which he was distinguished, were clearly foretold by the prophet Daniel, more than 400 years before the prediction received its accomplishment; as may be seen by consulting the eighth chapter of his prophecy. Daniel likewise foretold, in the ninth chapter, 26th and 27th verses, of his prophecy, the destruction of the city of Jerusalem: the *general* desolation, not only of the city, but of all

the land of Judea, together with the final cessation of the sacrifices and oblations of the Jews. The accomplishment of all these predictions is clearly and fully attested by the faithful pages of Roman and Jewish history. The prophet Hosea, who died before the Babylonish captivity, clearly pointed out the present condition of the Jewish nation, in the following remarkable words—remarkable, I say, because they apply so plainly and forcibly to their present state—"They shall be wanderers," says he, "among the nations." See chapter ix. 17.

These are only a few predictions, out of about *two hundred*, which relate directly to the Jews and Israelites, together with other descendants of Abraham, and which constitute such an essential part of the Jewish records. If these prophecies, and prophetic writings can be overthrown, the whole Jewish history must be consigned to oblivion. But they have defied the attacks of all ages, and are far better attested than the records of any ancient nation upon the face of the whole earth. Hence the truth of prophecy and inspiration defies the combined efforts of all its enemies, and instructs its faithful disciples to pity the deception, and pray for the enlightening of all its deluded and misguided opposers.



## LECTURE XI.

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HEBREWS, i. 1, 2.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things.”

Although the miraculous generation of Jesus Christ is most sincerely believed by your speaker, still it will not be the subject of minute and labored discussion in these lectures, since it is not a point on which the credibility of the history of the birth, ministry, miracles, labors, death and resurrection of the Saviour depends. That he is the Son of God, is acknowledged in the creeds of all who assume the name of Christians, or who profess to depend on the divine inspiration of the writings of the New Testament. It is therefore deemed unnecessary to call your attention to those parts of scripture history which are not absolutely susceptible of the most plain and positive proof; such as shall defy the arts and evasions of skepticism, and place the most prominent and important facts of the history of Christ, beyond the power of reasonable and historical contradiction. The facts on which we are about to remark, were not removed to some remote corner of the earth, or to the limits of an empire which has long since been consigned to the shades of oblivion, or whose history has been lost in the rubbish of antique fable : But they are facts which transpired under the powerful sway of imperial Rome ; when, in point of prosperity, she was at the very zenith of her glory, and when she held dominion over more than half of the whole globe.

The remotest parts of Asia had bowed before her standards ; diadems were disposed according to the pleasure of her emperors ; and her proud eagles had *extended* their wings over the British Isles, which,

in the familiar language of scripture, was designated as "the ends of the earth." The most powerful and polished nations of the earth acknowledged her sovereignty, and trembled at the stern mandates of her power.

At a period, when a general impression prevailed throughout the eastern world, that some extraordinary personage would soon make his appearance among men, and establish a new and more happy form of government; we date the welcome birth and glorious entry of the "Prince of Peace" into our world.

That such were the anticipations of the whole Jewish nation, is too evident to admit of a single doubt. The patriarch Jacob, whose predictions Moses had long since recorded, taught them to expect that the Shiloh should come, ere the sceptre departed from Judah, or a lawgiver from between his feet.

When the intelligence of the singular star, which was seen in the east, was communicated to Herod by the wise men, he called the chief priests and scribes of the Jews, and demanded of them where Christ should be born. This question, it appears, they readily answered, and informed him that it was evident that the Messiah was to be born in *Bethlehem* of Judea. They were led to this conclusion by the prophecy of Micah, who lived more than 700 years before Christ; and who designated Bethlehem, as the place of the Saviour's birth. This fact will appear evident, by comparing Micah v. 2; with St. Matt. ii. 5, 6.

Having settled the question, *where* the Saviour was to be born, according to prophetic authority, and shown that the Jewish doctors anticipated that the birth of the Messiah would be in Bethlehem, we shall now attend to the time of his birth, and show by prophetic authority that he was expected at about the period in which he made his appearance.

The Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmudists, in fix-

ing the time of the Messiah's birth, place it about 4000 years from the creation. The Babylonian Doctors supposed that Messiah would be born about four hundred years after the destruction of the first Temple, as may be seen by consulting the dissertation of Dr. *Lightfoot* on the time of Christ's birth. This calculation of the Babylonian Doctors, which placed the coming of Christ about one hundred years earlier than the true period of his birth, will readily account for the general expectation which every where prevailed, for a considerable time before the event transpired. But the testimony on which the whole Jewish nation placed their principal reliance, was that which was contained in the prophecy of Daniel, 9th chap. concerning the seventy weeks, which, according to the custom of prophet reckoning, a day for a year, would fix the Messiah's birth at a distance of about four hundred and ninety years from the close of the Babylonish captivity.

This period arrived, and the whole nation was anxiously looking for the appearance of the illustrious Prince, by whom they anticipated a speedy and glorious deliverance from all their oppressions. The preaching of John the Baptist drew the attention of the doctors and public functionaries of the Jewish nation, and excited the inquiry, whether he were the Christ, or whether they should look for another—for they evidently esteemed John as a great prophet. These are not the only facts with which we are furnished in Scripture, in relation to this event. The appearance of a singular star, or luminous body, was alluded to by Balaam, more than fifteen hundred years before, when he beheld in prophetic vision, the future glory of the house of Jacob, under the triumphant reign of the Prince of Peace. The singular prophecy of Balaam seems to have been preserved by the Chaldeans, Persians, Mesopotamians and Idumeans; and from the best evidences which we can gather out of the ancient records and traditions, other nations, as well as the

Jews, were looking for the appearance of an extraordinary person, or Ruler, among the descendants of Jacob.

I shall here notice a few evidences that such an expectation was not peculiar to the Jews. Seutonius, a Roman historian says, that "an ancient and settled persuasion prevailed throughout the east, that the Fates had decreed some one to proceed from Judea, who should attain universal empire. This persuasion, which the event proved (*as this writer supposes*), "to respect the Roman Emperor, the Jews applied to themselves and therefore rebelled." But the inconsistency of applying this settled and prevailing persuasion to the Roman Emperor, is apparent to the smallest capacity; for he tells us plainly, that the persuasion was that it should rise out of Judea: therefore, it could have no reference to the Roman Emperor, unless it can be shown that the Roman Emperor was a Jew. This, however, no man in his senses, will attempt to prove, or even pretend to believe.

Tacitus, another Roman historian, furnishes a similar passage. He tells us, Book v. that at the time Jerusalem was besieged by Titus, "many were under a strong persuasion, that in the ancient books kept by their Priests, a prophecy was contained, *that at this very time the power of the East should prevail, and out of Judea should spring such as were to rule over all nations.*" But he calls this a prophetic riddle, by which Titus and Vespasian were prefigured. Here again you see the same inconsistent conclusion with that of Seutonius: for the prediction supposed that this power of universal dominion should spring out of Judea.

The representations of these Roman historians accord so perfectly with the prophecy of Daniel, concerning the Messiah, that it is difficult to resist the inclination to bring them into fellowship, in this department of our labours. "I saw in the night visions, and behold, *one like the son of man came*

with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not be destroyed." Dan. vii. 13, 14. This prediction, in connexion with his prophecy of the *seventy weeks*, which has before been noticed, shows, with great clearness, that a character similar to that which was described by Seutonius, was universally expected among the Jews at about the period of the Saviour's birth.

To place the fact beyond all doubt, that some extraordinary personage, some illustrious Ruler, who should sway the sceptre of the globe, was generally expected throughout the eastern heathen world, I shall lay before you a part of the much admired eclogue of Virgil, written about forty years before the birth of Christ. It is supposed to have been composed as a compliment to Marcellus, the nephew of Augustus, and son of Octavia. The simple fact, that Marcellus was never placed upon the throne of the Roman empire; that he had little to do in the affairs of government, and that he died a private man, affords sufficient evidence that the character here described will not apply to him; nor will it apply to any temporal monarch that ever existed upon the earth: Still it evinces that the expectation of a glorious and universal ruler prevailed, and that the anticipation was ardently indulged by the heathen world.

"*Sicilian Muses, let us attempt more exalted strains! The last era foretold in Cumean verse is already arrived. The grand series of revolving ages commences anew. Now a new progeny is sent down from lofty heaven. Be propitious, chaste Lucina to the infant boy—by him the iron years shall close, and the golden age shall arise upon all the world. Under thy consular sway, Pollio, shall this glory of the age make his entrance, and the great months*

begin their revolutions. Should any vestiges of guilt remain, swept away under thy direction; the earth shall be released from fear forever; and with his father's virtues shall he rule the tranquil world. The earth shall pour before thee, sweet boy, without culture, her smiling first fruits. The timid herds shall not be afraid of the large fierce lions. The venomous asp shall expire, and the deadly, poisonous plant shall wither. The fields shall become yellow with golden ears of corn; the blushing grape shall hang over the wild bramble; and the stubborn oak shall distil soft dewy honey. Yet still shall some vestiges of pristine vice remain; which shall cause the sea to be ploughed with ships—towns to be besieged—and the face of the earth to be wounded with furrows. New wars shall arise—new heroes be sent to battle—But when thy *maturity* is come, every land shall produce all necessary things, and commerce shall cease. The ground shall not endure the harrow, nor shall the vine need the pruning-hook: As they wove their thread, the Destinies sang this strain—"Roll on ye years of felicity!"—Bright offspring of the gods! thou great increase of Jove! advance to thy distinguished honors! for now the time approaches! Behold the vast globe, with its ponderous convexity, bows to thee! the lands—the expansive seas—the sublime heavens! See, how all things rejoice in this advancing era! Oh! that the closing scenes of a long life may yet hold out, and so much fire remain, as shall enable me to celebrate thy deeds!\*

This quotation clearly proves that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, were anxiously and confidently expecting a glorious sovereign; beyond all comparison, wise, benevolent, and powerful; who should introduce and perpetuate the golden age, spread peace through all the earth, and bring vice and wretchedness to an end. This conclusion will be fully justified by a quotation from Isaiah xi. 5-9. 14.

\* Virg. Ecl. iv. Pollio, as translated by W. B. Collyer.

12, 13, where the happy influence of the Messiah's reign is described in the most sublime prophetic figures; and from which it has been supposed by some, that Virgil drew his elegant description of the golden age. "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow, and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice-den. They shall not hurt, nor destroy, in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing: and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree."

Such were the pleasing and prevailing anticipations of both Jews and Gentiles, respecting the glorious reign of an expected Prince! But no earthly prince; no mere mortal, could ever answer this description, or banish vice and misery from the world: The anticipations, therefore, of both Jews and heathens, embraced a being of a higher nature, and of higher powers, than any which could ever be claimed by the mere sons of earth.

From the biography of Socrates, the renowned philosopher of Athens, who died 400 years before the birth of Christ, we are furnished with a glowing description of the illustrious character which was expected, and which could alone effect the moral renovation of a sinful world. In this description he tells his countrymen—"that it is necessary to wait *till such a personage shall appear to teach them how*

they ought to conduct themselves, both towards God and towards man." And then breaks forth in the following exclamation :—"O when shall that period arrive ! And who shall be that teacher ? How ardently do I desire to see this man, who he is ?"—In communicating his views of this august character, which he expected would appear in the world, he expresses an opinion that he "must be of higher than human extraction ; for that as beasts are governed by men, so must man be guided by a nature superior to his own." Thus, my hearers, we see, that the nations of the east were all expecting a divine communication from heaven, and a glorious Prince of Peace ; to reform the world, and to put an end to the reign of sin, of violence and oppression, and to bring mankind into a state of harmony and peace—to display the charms of moral virtue, and to enjoy all the sweets of social harmony and love. And who, but the Saviour of the world, could answer the expectations which universally prevailed ? Who, but Jesus of Nazareth, could effect this mighty revolution in the moral world, and bring the nations of the earth to obey the perfect law of love ? But I must forbear to expatiate upon these sublime anticipations, and pass to notice other facts which are connected with the design of this discourse.

I have before had occasion to allude to the star which appeared in the east, and which directed the wise men to the place of our Saviour's nativity. In relation to this, I shall only offer a few passing remarks, to show that such an appearance is not so singular as to be confined to biblical history, nor at all improbable, admitting other historians to be worthy of credit : For Pliny speaks of "a certain splendid comet, scattering its silver hair, and appearing a god in the midst of men." And Chalcidius, a Platonic philosopher, mentions "the rising of a certain star, not denouncing death and disease, but the descent of a mild and compassionate god to human converse." Now putting these accounts with the



prophecy of Balaam, which was known to the eastern world ; and supposing these *wise men*, or Magi, what they are generally supposed to have been, priests and philosophers ; probably from Mesopotamia, (*the country of Balaam*,) is there any thing very unreasonable in the account which St. Matthew records ? It is evident from the plainest facts, that Matthew wrote his gospel history, at least, as early as *eight years* after the death of Christ ; and if his narrative had been false, both the Jews and the Romans would undoubtedly have contradicted his testimony. But both Jewish and Roman historians are silent upon this subject. It is reasonable, therefore, to admit his narrative, until some evidence can be adduced to invalidate its truth.

Connected with the story of the wise men, however, we find an account of the cruelty of Herod, which is not recorded by Josephus, nor by Roman historians. And is this any evidence that the facts stated by Matthew are unworthy of credit ? Who does not know that Josephus recorded such facts as related to the history of the affairs of state ; and that the same is true of the Roman historians of that age ? And who is not equally familiar with the fact, that Matthew recorded such transactions only as were connected with the history of Jesus Christ ? Josephus wrote his history more than seventy years after the birth of Christ ; he must, therefore, have drawn his facts from the Jewish and Roman records. And is it to be supposed that the *friends and dependants* of Herod, who had charge of these registers, would record such acts of cruelty as were not absolutely connected with the affairs of state ? It is not—and we might, with equal propriety question other acts of cruelty, in this unfeeling and sanguinary prince, which are recorded by Josephus, because they are not recorded by St. Matthew. If the character of Herod were not such as to justify the belief of such cruelty, we might find some excuse for rejecting the narrative of St. Matthew. But the his-

tory of that prince is a history of cruelty and blood ! The abominable cruelty of Herod is not passed in silence by Josephus. He informs us that Herod slew Hyrcanus, his wife's grandfather, at the advanced age of eighty years ! and who had saved his life on a former occasion ! That he publicly executed his amiable wife, Mariamne, and privately slaughtered three of his own children, to gratify a disposition of unmanly revenge and detestable jealousy ! And if he would not spare his own children, is it reasonable to suppose that he would spare the children of others—especially when he was led to fear a rival in the throne ? He was doubtless led to fear such a rival, by the inquiry of the *wise men*, who demanded to know where he was, “that was born king of the Jews :” and he readily concluded that by slaying all the children of Bethlehem, from two years old, and under, he should be no longer under the dread and suspense of a rival in the throne of Judea. His whole character was such as to justify and confirm the story of this infant slaughter ; and even the very last act of his abominable life, stamps his memory with perpetual infamy and disgrace. In his last sickness, just before his death, and when all hopes of recovery had fled, he caused all the principal men in Judea to be convened and shut up in the Circus ; and then called his family together, and said to them, “I know that the Jews will rejoice at my death. You have these men in your custody. So soon as I am dead, before it can be known publicly, let in the soldiers upon them, and *kill them* ! All Judea, and every family, will then, although unwillingly, mourn my death.” And the historian adds, “he conjured them by their love to him, and their fidelity to God, not to fail to obey his orders !” For the honor of human nature, however, we ought to record, that they neglected to obey this inhuman and bloody edict.

After the recital of these historical facts, who can reflect upon this unnatural monster's disposition, and

for a moment discredit the cruelty ascribed to him by Matthew ? If a solitary voice dare rise in his defence, let them read Macrobius, an heathen author of the fourth century, and near its close, who declares this cruelty to be well known, and a fact of such notoriety as to be indisputable.

Many circumstances which are related by Matthew and Luke, and which were connected with his birth, must be omitted, as they are not absolutely necessary to establish the history of the Saviour's life and doctrine : such as the message of the angel to the shepherds ; the prophecies of Simeon and Anna ; the journey to Egypt and return to Judea, and his reasoning with the Jewish Doctors in the temple. Passing over these events, I beg leave to remark, as preparatory to the introduction of the plain and pointed testimony of some of the most conspicuous unbelievers of the gospel, while it was in its infancy, that you are doubtless too well acquainted with the plain, simple, unstudied and unvarnished narrative of the life, doctrines and miracles of Christ, recorded in the gospel history, to render their recital necessary, or even expedient in this stage of our labors. I shall therefore call your attention to the testimony of Josephus, who was a Jew by birth and education, a Priest of the Jewish church, a Pharisee in principle, a commander in Judea, afterwards a prisoner to the Romans, and present at the taking of Jerusalem, by the army of Titus. His works evince his ability, as a scholar, and an accurate and faithful historian. He was born a short time (about four years) after the crucifixion of Christ, and therefore had an opportunity of being acquainted with the evidences of the christian religion, and the principal facts which were recorded in the history of Christ. To the leading facts in that history, he bears the following testimony, when writing of what transpired in the days of Pontius Pilate:

“Now there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man : for he was

a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him ; for he appeared to them alive again the third day ; as the divine prophets had foretold." And he adds, "and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day." See *Antiquities*, Book 18.

Of this quotation, I shall doubtless be told, that it is an *interpolation*, and therefore of no authority in confirmation of the facts which it is alleged to support.

I am aware that the opposers of the gospel history have affirmed with much apparent confidence, that the passage recited from Josephus is an interpolation: But it is an affirmation, for the support of which, no solid evidence can be adduced. On the other hand, - we beg leave to remind our opposers, that Origen, a man of uncommon learning, and critical knowledge, who flourished in the latter part of the *second*, and to the middle of the *third* century, alludes directly to this testimony, in his first book against Celsus. Here let me ask the question ; would any writer who valued his reputation, dare to make such a reference, at a period so near the time in which Josephus lived ; and in a controversy with the enemies of christianity, if no such passage were contained in the history of Josephus ?—Again, would not the watchful and malignant opposers of christianity, instantly have detected the fraud of such an interpolation, if such fraud had been committed, and gladly have employed it to brand with infamy the christian cause ? They certainly would, since they must have known that the detection of such a fraud would have been of more service to the cause of infidelity than all other facts and arguments to which they could appeal. This objec-

tion, therefore, of our opposers, only weakens their own cause, and strengthens that which it was intended to destroy. Other evidences in confirmation of the gospel history, will be reserved as the subject of our next lecture.

## LECTURE XII.

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HEBREWS, i. 1, 2.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things."

In the closing part of my last Lecture, I had occasion to quote the testimony of Josephus, concerning the character and ministry of Christ, as well as his condemnation, crucifixion, and resurrection from the dead, in the days and under the administration of Pontius Pilate, who was at that time procurator of Judea. I also anticipated and answered the objection which has been alleged to the genuineness of that testimony, by referring to the writings of Origen, one of the most celebrated authors of the early part of the third century.

I shall now present you with the same kind of evidence, from several authors of great respectability, who have appealed to Josephus for the confirmation of the principal events recorded in the history of the Saviour.

Justin Martyr, who had been a heathen philosopher in Samaria, but afterwards became an able and zealous advocate for the gospel; and who, in the time of a most bloody persecution, appeared before the Emperor Antonius, and successfully pleaded the cause of the oppressed and persecuted christians; in his dialogue with Trypho, says to the Jews, "You knew that Jesus was risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, as the prophecies did foretel was to happen." This author suffered martyrdom in the year 162.

Origen, in his commentary on Matthew, quotes verbatim the language of Josephus, as recorded in his twentieth Book of Antiquities, concerning the death of James the *Just*, where the historian calls

him "the brother of Jesus, who is called *Christ*." Again—the passage which we have before quoted from Josephus, concerning the life, condemnation and crucifixion of the Saviour, under Pontius Pilate, is quoted by Eusebius, a native of Palestine, Bishop of Cesarea, who died in the early part of the fourth century, both in his commentary on Matthew, and in his ecclesiastical history. Ambrose, who wrote about the year 360; Hieronym, who wrote about the year 400; Isidore, a disciple and pupil of Chrysostom, who wrote about the year 410; Sozomen, an ecclesiastical historian, who wrote in the early part of the fifth century—all quote the same testimony of Josephus, with the utmost confidence of its truth, as well as many others who followed them down to the *sixteenth century*: If this passage were an interpolation, as some have pretended, how should it happen that all the early writers should appear so totally ignorant of the fact? Would not some of the early enemies of Christianity have alleged the charge of deception against these christian writers, who appealed to this passage in Josephus? And is it not an unavoidable conclusion that a controversy upon the merits of this famous passage would have come down to us, provided the genuineness of its character had been challenged in the early ages of the christian church? Such appears to be the only conclusion to which we are directed by impartial reason.

There are a few other facts to which I will now invite your attention. The same emperors, kings, governors, procurators, civil magistrates, and ecclesiastical functionaries which are mentioned in the New Testament history, are likewise mentioned by Josephus, and the same periods assigned by both for their lives and public acts. It also appears that all the books of the New Testament, except the Apocalypse of St. John, were written and extensively circulated previous to the death of Josephus: So that had they been susceptible of the charge of *forgery*, that historian would have detected the im-

posture and exploded the deception. But on the contrary, he bears his testimony to so many of the important facts which the gospel history contains, as fairly to establish their entire credibility.

I will here notice a few of them which have escaped the charge of forgery and the suspicion of interpolation; and which, of themselves, furnish incontrovertible evidence of the credibility of the gospel history.

Josephus records the name of John the Baptist; that he was a baptizer, and preached the remission of sins to those who received his baptism: This may be seen by consulting the *eighteenth* book of his Antiquities. In the same book he mentions the extensive influence which John the Baptist had obtained over the minds of the multitude; the unlawful marriage of Herod, to Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and his inhumanity in casting John into prison, and the order for his being put to death: He also asserts that John the Baptist was a most righteous man, and one whom all men esteemed for his piety. These facts accord so well with the gospel history, that whoever rejects the one, must reject the other also.

In his *twentieth* Book, he records the massacre of James the Just, whom he calls "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ;" and expresses an opinion which prevailed among the Jews, that Jerusalem was destroyed as a punishment for his murder. This James is mentioned in the New Testament, as the brother and apostle of Christ; and one of his epistles is now numbered with the canonical books of the New Testament. He was the first who filled the office of Bishop of Jerusalem; was universally esteemed for his piety, and was put to death in the year sixty-two. To these facts, *twenty-four* ecclesiastical writers and historians appeal in succession, previous to the *fourteenth* century. Nor has their truth ever been called in question by a single writer of note. The facts are therefore too plain for de-



nial, so long as the voice of history is allowed to be received in evidence. These are a few of the leading and important facts recorded in the evangelical history, and to which an unbelieving Jew felt himself under the necessity of bearing testimony, while recording the public acts of Herod and Pontius Pilate. They carry with them such plain and evident marks of truth, that skeptics have found it necessary, either to pass them in silence, or attempt to weaken the credibility of this historian, by branding him with the charge of superstition. But his character as an historian is too well established, to be in the least shaken by such feeble attempts.

Tacitus, the celebrated Roman historian, who flourished as a writer and public advocate, about *fifty years* after the crucifixion of Christ, notwithstanding his bitter enmity to, and abhorrence of Christians, has recorded such facts relating to its origin and rapid progress, as must for ever silence the clamor of those who are idle enough to pretend that Christ was an obscure individual, or that his religion was little known during the first century.—For this author tells us in his *fifteenth* book, when speaking of those people who were called *christians*—“The founder of this name was CHRIST, one who in the reign of TIBERIUS suffered death as a criminal, under PONTIUS PILATE, Imperial Procurator of Judea, and, for a while, the pestilent superstition was quelled, but revived again and spread, not only over Judea, where it was first broached, but even through Rome.” The historian is here writing of a period when christianity was in its infancy, and during the life-time of some of the apostles. He describes in glowing colors the cruelty of Nero, who, having set fire to the city of Rome, that he might be gratified with a spectacle of what he had read concerning the burning of Troy, attempted to cast the odium upon the innocent followers of our Lord. In this, the monster was but too successful, and a *vast* multitude of christians of different ages and

sexes, suffered the most cruel torture and death.— Their sufferings are thus described by the historian. “First therefore, were seized, such as freely owned their sect; then, a vast multitude by them discovered; and all were convicted,”—(not of the imputed crime of burning Rome, but of being christians, which was mistaken for hatred to mankind.) The historian adds—“To their death and torture were added the aggravations of cruel derision and sport; for, either they were disguised in the skins of savage beasts, and were exposed to expire by the teeth of devouring dogs; or they were hoisted up alive, and nailed to crosses; or wrapped in combustible vestments, and set up as torches, that when the day set, they might be kindled to illuminate the night. For presenting this tragical spectacle, NERO had lent his own gardens, and exhibited at the same time the public diversion of the Circus, sometimes driving a chariot in person, and, at intervals, standing as a spectator amongst the vulgar, in the habit of a charioteer. Hence it proceeded, that towards the miserable sufferers, popular commiseration arose, as for a people who, with no view to the utility of the state, but only to gratify the bloody spirit of one man, were doomed to perish.”

Here Tacitus informs us that the christian sect was founded by Christ, who was put to death under the reign of Pontius Pilate; that the sect became so numerous in a short time, as to spread throughout all the country of Judea; that vast numbers of them were found at Rome, in the reign of Nero, and suffered the most cruel and frightful deaths to gratify the hellish and unnatural revenge of the most ungodly assassin that ever disgraced the history of man; and that they suffered without being guilty of the crime with which they were charged. Let us here mark a few facts which are worthy of special notice. This writer was a pagan, bitterly opposed to the religion of Christ, born about twenty years after the crucifixion, and about the time that Nero

accessed to the empire of Rome ; had access to all the sources of correct information, and was doubtless well acquainted with all the facts which he relates of the history of the christians. His unbelief of the gospel, and his superstitious attachment to pagan idolatry, will readily account for all the reproaches which he heaps upon the early christians. But it cannot be denied, that when an *open enemy* bears witness to the truths which the evangelical historians have recorded, and especially when he testifies the *innocence* of those whom he *hates*, he is fully entitled to the credit of his readers ; for no man can reasonably be suspected of falsehood, when he gives evidence in favor of a cause which he obviously wishes to condemn. With these facts, supplied by the testimony of the bitterest enemies to christianity, respecting the origin and early extensive progress of the gospel ; supplied too, by men of undoubted learning, ability and historical knowledge ; by men who lived in the age of the apostles and their associates—with these important and interesting facts staring them in the face, how is it, that modern skeptics dare deny the plain and simple truths of the gospel history, and attempt to persuade us that the whole story is a falsehood and a cheat ? They must be either ignorant of history, lost to reason, or enemies to themselves and mankind.

It is well known that the Jews were among the most bitter enemies of Christ and his followers. To them, the miracles of Jesus and his disciples were daily exhibited; and the inference is unavoidable, that could they have denied their reality with the least prospect of success, they would not have failed to improve the slightest pretext for so doing. So far were they from denying these miracles, however, that the Mishna, a collection of Jewish traditions, made by Rabbi Jekuda, in about the year 180, besides a commentary on the same, both fully acknowledge their existence; but the one attributes

them to a concert with Beelzebub, as the envious, Jews, in whose presence these miracles were performed, had before done, while the other asserts them to be the effect of magic. These books, which were written with so much enmity to the christian religion, acknowledge the existence of Christ, as the author of a new religion; bear testimony to his miracles; speak of the state of the Jews as being the same which is described by the Evangelists; mention the disciples as having followed Christ and wrought miracles in his name; speak of the destruction of Jerusalem; testify the rise and extensive prevalence of christianity, and bear witness to the constancy of the early professors of that religion. To this acknowledgment of important facts, by the bitter opposers of christianity, Origen appeals with confidence, and urges them as an undeniable evidence of the truth of the christian history.

Justin Martyr, whom we have mentioned before, engaged in controversy with the philosophers of his age, and especially with Crescens, the cynic, whom he challenged to debate the cause of christianity with him before the Roman senate: But Crescens, though one of the most learned and acute philosophers of the age, did not see fit to accept the offer, which he undoubtedly would have done, had he thought there was any probability of detecting any palpable forgeries in the writings of the evangelists. This challenge was given a little more than one hundred years after our Saviour's crucifixion. This advocate for the christian cause, in his Apology, when speaking of the sufferings of Christ, refers the emperor to the acts of Pontius Pilate, which were then extant, for a full confirmation of the facts of that tragical event, the crucifixion of Christ. Tertulian, who wrote his Apology about fifty years after, speaks likewise of the acts of Pilate, and tells us that the emperor Tiberius, having received an account of Jesus, out of Palestine, threatened to punish the accusers of the christians; that he paid him partic-

ular regard, and would have admitted him into the number of the gods which he worshipped, had not the senate rejected the proposal. It is here proper to remark, that the "acts of Pilate," to which we have referred, had perished before the days of Eusebius, though this historian mentions them as having been formerly well known. The modern work, bearing this title, is therefore evidently spurious.

I will now present you with a part of a letter, written between 70 and 80 years after the death of Christ, by Pliny the younger, a zealous pagan idolator, and addressed to the emperor Trajan, concerning the christians, which affords a clear and ample proof of their numbers and their innocence, notwithstanding the unrighteous calumnies which were heaped upon them by the enemies of the gospel. He informs the emperor that multitudes were brought before him, and accused of being christians, and gives an account of the manner of his proceedings with them. "I asked them, (*says he*) whether they were christians or not? If they confessed that they were christians, I asked them again, and a third time, intermixing threatenings with the questions: If they persevered in their confession, I ordered them to be executed; for I did not doubt but, let their confession be of any sort whatever, this positiveness and inflexible obstinacy deserved to be punished. There have been some of this mad sect whom I took notice of in particular, as Roman citizens, that they might be sent to that city. After some time, as is usual in such examinations, the crime (*of being christians,*) spread itself, and many more cases came before me, though without an author, containing many names [of persons accused.] However, they assured me, that the main of their fault, or of their mistake, was this, that they were wont, on a stated day, to meet together before it was light, and to sing an hymn to Christ, as to a god, alternately; and to oblige themselves by a *sacrament* [or oath] not to do any thing that was ill,

but that they would commit no theft, or pilfering, or adultery; that they would not break their promise, or deny what was deposited with them when it was required back again: After which it was their custom to depart, and to meet again at a common but innocent meal, which yet they had left off upon that edict which I had published at your command, and wherein I had forbidden any such conventicles. These examinations made me think it necessary to inquire by torments, what the truth was, which I did of two servant maids, which were called *deuconesses*; but still I discovered no more, than that they were addicted to a bad and an extravagant superstition. Hereupon I have put off any farther examinations, and have recourse to you, for the affair seems to be well worth consultation, especially on account of the number of those that are in danger; for there are many of every age, of every rank, and of both sexes, which are now and hereafter likely to be called to account, and to be in danger; for this superstition is spread like a contagion, not only in cities and towns, but into the country villages also, which yet there is reason to hope may be stopped and corrected."

In this letter, you perceive that no crime is alleged against them, and that the innocence of their lives is attested by one who abhorred their religion to such a degree that he ordered those to be executed who persisted in professing their faith in Christ: And this he did until he found the christians so numerous that he shuddered at the thought of destroying such a multitude: Their numbers may easily be imagined, by the notice which Pliny gives the emperor in this same epistle; for he apprises him that the heathen temples were almost entirely deserted.

I have not introduced the testimony of Pliny, as a *direct* and *positive* evidence of the truth of what the evangelists have recorded concerning Christ, but as a *circumstantial* evidence which carries with it all the force of *positive proof*: for it would baffle the most

profound ingenuity to account for the numbers and practice of these christians, at so early a period too, if their faith and practice were not founded upon the commands and instructions of Christ and his apostles, or if they had not been in possession of the most incontrovertible evidence of the facts of that history: For never was it known that men suffered the most cruel persecution and death in the defence of what they knew or believed to be false, when they could be restored to liberty and life, by a simple recantation of what they had professed. The only solution of their constancy in the faith and practice of christianity, is, they had received these truths from the apostles and their associates, confirmed by ocular demonstrations of miraculous power.

I shall now proceed to lay before you the testimony of another witness, the force of whose evidence bids defiance to the whole host of modern skeptics, either to resist or evade. He was a pagan philosopher, of the Epicurian school ; flourished in the *second* century, and wrote in the character of a Jew, undoubtedly for the purpose of enlisting in his favor, all the prejudices of that ill-fated people. His studied and malignant attack on christianity was triumphantly refuted by Origen, in the early part of the *third* century. He has uniformly been considered as a file-leader in the ranks of infidelity, and was confessedly acquainted with all the evidences, both for and against the gospel history, as well as the arguments which were employed by both Jews and pagans, to invalidate the truth of the gospel.—His testimony, therefore, must be of essential service, since it embraces the leading facts which are contained in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, and which were well known and publicly taught, to the very period in which he wrote. The name of this philosopher will never perish, so long as any controversy is maintained between the friends and enemies of revealed religion ; for its enemies will never cease to execrate the memory of Cel-

sus, since he has given a death blow to all their pretensions that the gospel history is a *forgery*, by acknowledging the authority of all its leading facts. Nor will its friends forbear appealing to his testimony, since the leading truths for which they contend are confirmed by the pen of one of the bitterest and best informed enemies of the christian religion. The following concessions of Celsus, are embodied from the writings of Origen, by Rev. T. Dwight, D. D. late President of Yale College, in an oration, delivered at New-Haven, Conn. 1793.

Celsus "testifies that there were books, written by the disciples of CHRIST; containing an account of his life and actions, his own discourses and words; particularly several predictions of his; his name, Logos, or the Word of God; his genealogy, and that of Mary, his mother. He further testifies that he was born of a virgin, and was reputed to be the son of a carpenter; that the Chaldeans were reported to have come, and worshipped him, when he was an infant; that Herod the tetrarch, being informed of this, ordered all, who had been born in that village, about that time, to be killed, intending to kill him, lest he should afterwards take the government; that he was carried into Egypt, lest he should be killed; that Angels were sent on this account; that he was baptized by John; that the Holy Spirit descended on him, in the shape of a dove; that a voice from heaven, declared him to be the Son of God; that he was very poor; went about from place to place; took to himself ten or eleven abjects, or low people; healed diseases, and raised the dead; fed multitudes with a few loaves, of which large fragments were left; was called a Nazarene; represented himself as sent not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; forbade the anxious pursuit of riches; exposed the difficulty of obtaining immortal life by the rich; was called upon to show a sign in the temple; was deserted, denied, and betrayed, by his companions; was derided, clad in a purple



robe, crowned with thorns, had a reed put into his hands ; thirsted, and had gall and vinegar given to him ; that blood flowed from his side ; that he died a shameful death, and was reviled at his death ; that he foreknew, and foretold his sufferings ; rose again from the dead ; shewed himself to a woman, and to several others ; showed the marks of the nails ; breathed on his disciples ; was the first Author of the Christian persuasion ; taught the doctrine but a few years before Celsus wrote ; was at that time esteemed superior to Angels, reckoned to be the Son of God, and called a God ; and that one Angel, and, in another place, two were said to appear at the sepulchre of Jesus. Celsus, also, testifies further, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and of a future, immortal life, founded on the life, death, and preaching of Christ, was recorded by his disciples ; that many Jews believed on him, and forsook the worship of their own country ; that his followers were, at first, few in number, and of one mind ; that they afterwards became numerous, spread abroad, and were divided in opinion ; that they customarily met together, in assemblies, and there taught things agreeable to their sentiments ; that they were forbidden to partake in idol-feasts, and refused to join in idol-worship ; and that the Jews were punished for the crucifixion of Jesus."

Such, my hearers, is the testimony of an early champion of pagan infidelity, and the first whom history records as having reduced his opposition to any thing like the form of a systematic attack upon the cause of christianity. Its importance in establishing the narrative of the birth, life, labors, miracles, death and resurrection of Christ, is so obvious to the most ordinary capacity, that it can be viewed in no other light than that of an unwilling tribute of acknowledgment to the truth of the plain and unvarnished history which the disciples of Christ have left us of their Master.—As we shall have occasion to notice his testimony again, we shall now

pass to notice the confessions of other early infidel writers, who have equally confirmed the great and leading facts which relate to the history of Jesus Christ.

JULIAN, who was educated a Christian, and whose education was both extensive and refined, as soon as he ascended the throne of the Roman empire, declared himself a Pagan, and laboured to suppress and destroy the christian religion. His testimony, therefore, cannot be suspected of any design to favor the cause which he labored to ruin and annihilate. But his evidence is, if possible, more unfortunate to the cause of infidelity than that of Celsus: For he bears a direct and positive testimony not only to *many* of the facts recorded by the Evangelists, but to the general history, so as to leave no ground for suspicion that the facts which it contains were the production of fraud or imposture; since the rank which he sustained and the learning that distinguished him, were such as to place him in possession of all the evidence which could be obtained, in favor, or against christianity. With all these advantages, this early apostate from christianity, declares that "Christ was born in the reign of Augustus, and at the time of taxing, or enrolment, made by Cyrenius or Quirinus; that the christian religion arose, in the time of Tiberius and Claudius; that the historical books of the New Testament were genuine and authentic; that they were the only historical books acknowledged, as of sacred authority, by the Christians, and the only authentic memoirs of Christ and his Apostles; that the gospels were written as early as is generally believed; and particularly, that John's, the last, was written soon after the death of Peter and Paul. He also testifies, that CHRIST cured the blind, the lame and the possessed, rebuked the winds and walked on the waves; that there were multitudes of Christians in Greece, and in Italy, before John wrote his gospel; that besides persons in humble life, Cornelius and

Sergius Paulus were christians; and that Peter and Paul were the great preachers of christianity.”\*

These are the testimonies of a Pagan Emperor, who died in the year 363. His design was, to overthrow the gospel; but he has strengthened and confirmed the history which the Evangelists wrote. And it is just to remark, that all the arguments which he has employed against the christian religion, are entirely harmless, since they are totally insufficient to unsettle the faith, or to weaken the confidence of the most feeble christian.

Hierocles, a violent enemy of the gospel, and persecutor of christians, who wrote against christianity in the *fourth* century; mentioned by Lactantius and Eusebius; and Porphyry, another writer against christianity, who died at the beginning of the *fourth* century; both acknowledge, in common with Celsus and Julian, the genuineness and authenticity of the historical books of the New Testament. And it will doubtless be inquired, if these writers acknowledged the writings of the Evangelists to be authentic, and consequently admitted the truth of the miracles of Christ and his apostles, in confirmation of his divine commission and doctrine, how could they possibly disbelieve the gospel which he taught and enforced by these miracles? I answer; they readily evaded the force of the argument, in favor of the gospel, drawn from these miracles, by attributing all the miracles of Christ and his apostles, to the power of *magic*! And Celsus gravely pretends to believe that Christ went to Egypt and there *learned the arts of magic*, by which he succeeded in establishing his religion among the credulous part of the Jews.

Now what can modern skeptics do with these facts? Their leaders, their philosophers, their early champions of infidelity, have established the truth recorded of the whole life, the death and resurrection of Christ, and have nothing left but the plea

\*See Dr. Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History.

of *magic*, to justify their infidelity! Of this the modern schools of infidelity are ashamed; for they are wise enough to reject the silly pretension, that by *magic arts*, miracles, bearing the indelible stamp of the most God-like benevolence, were ever performed. They are as far from believing that the power of *magic* ever gave life to the dead, hearing to the deaf, light to them that were born blind, cleansing to lepers, healing to the sick, soundness of limbs to the helpless cripple, restoration to the withered hand, or satisfied the hunger of thousands with the scanty store of five loaves and two small fishes, as are the most humble and devoted followers of Christ. Of course, they will not thank these early champions of infidelity for the ruin and disgrace which they have introduced into the camp of the enemies of revealed religion. They must, however, bend under this unwelcome burden, till they can so far divest themselves of candor and reason, as to reject all the evidence of sacred and profane history, and relieve, or rather *sear* their consciencies, by an utter rejection and denial of whatever does not transpire under their own immediate notice and inspection. For if they allow the authority of historical evidence, their file-leaders and prototypes have destroyed the cause of infidelity, by bearing testimony to the truth of the christian history.

I have now laid before you the testimony of the principal and best informed historians, as well as other writers of note, who flourished from the time of the crucifixion of Christ down to the close of the *fourth* century. Besides the writings of some of the most celebrated among the early christians, I have quoted you the acknowledgments of Josephus, in confirmation of the history of Christ; an author, who, for his candor and extensive knowledge, richly deserves to be styled the prince of Jewish historians. I have also given you the testimony of Rabbi Jekuda, author of the Mishna, and a most bitter enemy of the christian religion, who, with all his

bitterness, has confessed the principal facts recorded by the evangelical historians. To these, I have added the evidence of Tacitus, Pliny, Celsus, Julian, Hierocles and Porphyry; *six* of the best informed historians and polemical pagan writers who lived during, and soon after the apostolic age; all professed enemies to the christian religion, yet all uniting in their acknowledgments of the genuineness and authenticity of the gospel history, and recording precisely the same facts concerning the birth, preaching, miracles, trial, condemnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ which are given to us in the writings of the evangelists. Other heathen testimonies might be added to the list, but they are deemed unnecessary, since those whom we have already quoted are allowed to be the best and most accurate writers of the periods in which they lived. And I may here be allowed to remark, that no writer of note, pretended to deny the authenticity of the gospel history, for the space of 400 years from the birth of Christ: Their only weapons against christianity, were satire, scurrility and persecution; and their only defence against the argument drawn from the astonishing miracles of Christ and his apostles, was a superstitious and imbecile appeal to the *devil*, and the power of *magic*! With superstitious Jews and ignorant pagans, this answered for a time, and the cause of infidelity was kept in countenance by means which modern skeptics would blush to acknowledge: No alternative is left for them, but to renounce their ancient Fathers, and set up for themselves, by denying the credibility of all history, both sacred and profane; till they rashly plunge into the fearful gulf of ATHEISTICAL INFIDELITY!

Indulge, me, my hearers, in a brief summary of the leading events which are recorded in the history of Christ and his early followers. The evangelists have given us a plain and unvarnished narrative of the birth of their Master; the place of his *birth*; his baptism by John; his manner of life; his

discourses; his miracles of mercy, of healing and raising the dead; his prophecies, which have all been fulfilled, except those which relate to the final conquest of his truth and grace; the accusations of his enemies; the purity of his life; his trial before Pilate; his crucifixion; his resurrection and ascension:—Facts which were publicly known and testified by an immense number of witnesses in Judea, and in a few years spread over the whole Roman empire, though opposed by all the engines of torture which the malice of Jews and heathens could invent: Facts which could not be resisted by reason nor evidence, because attested by thousands of living witnesses, and clearly demonstrated by the miraculous displays of almighty power, the seal of Heaven's approbation! In a word, facts which were acknowledged for centuries, even by the enemies of Christ, and the ablest champions of early infidelity!

These, my hearers, are some of the leading evidences to which your attention has been called, to assist you in judging of the credibility of the gospel history, or history of the Saviour's life. And I appeal to your sober judgment to determine whether this history is not supported by stronger and more ample testimony than that of any other being that ever existed upon the face of the earth : and whether it is not evident beyond all reasonable doubt, and beyond the power of all historical contradiction, that the gospel and mission of Christ were stamped with the indelible seal of divine authority !

After all, will the enemies of revelation still invite and persuade you to renounce the faith of the christian religion ? With what pretensions can they attempt to shake your confidence ? Do they offer you an equivalent for your hope ? Will they pretend that history justifies them in a denial of these truths ?— They will not ; they dare not thus insult your understanding : for they know, (if they are acquainted with history,) that their whole system is nothing more than a catalogue of captious objections, sup-

ported by nothing but vulgar witticisms and unmanly satire—and they presume to depend on the ignorance and pride of the multitude, for their success. But the light of reason, truth and science, will break the fatal charm which they are attempting to throw around you, and disappoint all their fond delusive dreams.

There are other, and essential evidences of the truth of the gospel, which remain to be considered; but they will naturally fall into the design of our next lecture, and will therefore be omitted in the present discourse.

In closing this lecture, I feel myself irresistibly inclined to invite your attention to the closing scene of the Saviour's life, and to a few reflections upon the astonishing phenomenon which attended the tragical scene of his death upon the cross, when "he poured out his soul," (*his life,*) for a guilty world. Besides the occurrence of a tremendous earthquake, evincing the sympathies of nature; for three long hours, the splendors of the king of day were veiled in darkness, for which no natural or astronomical cause could be assigned. For, let it be remembered, that Christ was crucified on the day of the Jewish passover; and that this feast was observed on the *fourteenth* day of the month, which, according to the Jewish mode of reckoning, from the first appearance of the new moon, must have happened precisely at the time of her *full*, when she was opposite to the sun, and therefore precluded the possibility of an eclipse of the sun: for an eclipse of the sun can only take place, when the moon passes between the earth and that luminous body. At the time of the crucifixion, therefore, the earth being between the sun and the moon, an eclipse of the former would be utterly impossible, according to the fixed laws of astronomy. Again, we are informed by the historians, that the darkness continued for the space of *three hours*. But the total darkness of an eclipse, *never continues* more than about *fifteen minutes*, which

proves that it must have been a *miraculous*, and not an *ordinary* eclipse. To evince or rather strengthen the reality of this phenomenon, I beg leave to quote you the testimony of Phlegon, an able and learned astronomer, who flourished under the emperor Trajan, and who asserted, that "in the fourth year of the 202d Olympiad," the very year of the crucifixion, "there was such a total eclipse of the sun at noon day, that the stars were plainly visible." This testimony is preserved in the writings of Origen. In addition to this, Suidas informs us, that Dionysius, the Areopagite, an Athenian of great note, being at Heliopolis in Egypt, at the period of the crucifixion, exclaimed, when he witnessed this surprising phenomenon, "either the Author of nature is suffering, or he sympathizes with some one who does—or the frame of the world is dissolving."

Such, my friends, is the evidence with which we are furnished of the great events recorded in the early history of the religion which we profess: and truly, the sufferings and death by which its divine authority is sealed, ought to excite the liveliest gratitude of our hearts, and awake the slumbering energies of our souls, for its propagation and defence. It is the sacred charter of our dearest hopes, the pledge of God's impartial and unbounded love. Its prospects cheer the abodes of poverty and misfortune, add a sacred and divine enjoyment to all the blessings of Providence, impart contentment and resignation under all the allotments of unerring wisdom, arm the soul with fortitude to sustain the severest trials of life, inspire the mind with exalted conceptions of the great Divinity, and furnish the assurance of a better inheritance beyond the stormy regions of this changeful and imperfect scene of mortal existence! How blissful, how glorious the hope, which this holy religion inspires! Compared with its heavenly prospects, how sinks the earth, with all its boasted joys, to vanity and insignificance! The one is like the misty cloud, that van-



ishes before the rays of the morning sun ; but the other pours forth showers of salvation, or emits unfading beams of glory and infinite delight! Angels hail with joyful notes, with transports of immortal wonder, the full redeeming power of the Son of God, and swell in strains seraphic, the mighty conquests of his victorious grace! Be this enrapturing hope our joy in time; our consolation and support in death; and its boundless fruition, our everlasting portion in eternity!

## LECTURE XIII.

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ST. LUKE i. 1-4.

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed."

The design of this Lecture is to treat of the evidences by which the genuineness and authenticity of the books of the New Testament are supported, and to notice, as occasion may require, such external and internal evidences of the divine authority and inspiration of the gospel as may present themselves in the progress of our discussions.

I have before adduced the testimony of both the friends and enemies of the christian religion, to establish all the leading and essential facts which are recorded in the gospel history, and which are all-sufficient to place that subject beyond the power of reasonable or historical contradiction. We shall therefore proceed to notice the plain and pointed evidences by which we are induced to believe that the writings of the New Testament deserve the fullest confidence; and which afford the only rational ground of hope for a sinful and guilty world.

The first book in the New Testament; which naturally invites our attention, is the Gospel, which is alleged to have been written by Matthew, surnamed *Levi*, who was a disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ. This man was an Hebrew by birth and education, and was employed by the Roman authority as a tax-gatherer, and also collected the revenue of such goods as were exported or imported at Capernaum, a maritime town, on the sea of Galilee: He likewise received the tribute of all passengers that went by

water. From this occupation he was called by the divine Redeemer, to be a witness of his life, and a minister of his word.

The fact of his having filled a public and responsible office under the Roman government, is a sufficient evidence of his respectability and talents. It has never been denied by any of the early writers, either among the friends or enemies of christianity, that Matthew was a disciple and apostle of Christ: nor has this fact ever been denied by any modern writer of respectable character or talents.

That Matthew wrote the gospel history which bears his name, has uniformly been admitted by christians, from the days of the apostles to the present time: Nor did any of the early opposers of the gospel intimate a doubt on this subject: but on the contrary, quoted it as a genuine production. But the period in which it was written, has been a subject of much inquiry and discussion. All the controversialists, however, are agreed in assigning it a higher antiquity than they give to any other book of the New Testament. No writer on this subject, who has rendered himself familiar with the productions of the early christians, pretends that the narrative in question was written at the distance of more than about *thirty* years; while the most conclusive evidence assigns for the period of its publicity, from *four* to *eight* years after the crucifixion. It would indeed be very strange that *thirty* years should be suffered to pass away without leaving any authentic account of the life and doctrines of Christ, in such form as to be accessible by the multitude of those who had embraced the christian religion in Judea, and the adjoining regions; for they would require, as a matter of course, to be furnished with the history of the life and instructions of Christ, that they might compare them with the prophecies of the Old Testament, in which they reposed the fullest confidence, and be able to vindicate the principles and doctrines of their religion against the ob-

jections of their Jewish opposers. There are so many plain and pointed allusions to the persecutions which began immediately after the ascension of Christ, and which continued for *six* years, as to render it almost certain that the narrative of Matthew was written during that period. Besides these references, the gentleness with which he mentions the cruelty of Herod, towards John the Baptist, and his indignities to Christ, on the morning of his crucifixion, would naturally induce the belief that he wrote during the reign of that prince; as he exhibited no more of the odious traits of his character, lest they should excite his jealousy, or the disaffection of his subjects. If he was influenced by these motives, he must have written his gospel before the year 39, for in that year Herod was deposed and banished by the emperor Caligula. Finally, Matthew mentions Pilate, as being then governor of Judea; but Vitellius, governor of Syria, ordered Pilate to appear at Rome to answer to a complaint brought against him by the Samaritans; and before he arrived, the emperor, Tiberius, was dead. This emperor died in the year 37. Nor was Pilate ever after, procurator of Judea; for it was soon after annexed to the province of Syria. This circumstance renders it highly probable that Matthew's gospel was written as early as the year 37.

The language in which it was written, has also been a subject of doubt and of controversy: Some contending that it was written in Hebrew, or, in the Syro-Chaldaic dialect, then spoken by the Jews.—Others have insisted that it was written in the Greek, so as to be equally useful to Gentile, and Jewish christians. From the best evidence which your speaker can obtain upon this subject, he is satisfied that St. Matthew wrote his gospel, both in Hebrew and Greek—in Hebrew, for the use of the Jewish converts, previous to his departure from Jerusalem; and in Greek, for the edification of the multitude, to whom that language was familiar. It is quite evi-

dent that his Hebrew copy was corrupted by a party of the Ebionite christians, which, together with the contempt, into which the Jews and their language fell, soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, caused it to be suspected as a forgery, and rejected as a spurious production. The Greek of Matthew's gospel, however, never was viewed with suspicion by the early fathers and advocates of the gospel; and has therefore been transmitted to our times as an authentic narrative of facts. Eusebius, the ecclesiastical historian, gives it as his opinion, from all the information which he could derive from the writings of those who succeeded the apostles, in the government of the church, that "Matthew, having first preached to the Hebrews, delivered to them, when he was preparing to depart to other countries, his gospel, composed in their native language: that to those, from whom he was sent away, he might supply by his writings the loss of his presence."—This same historian receives it as an undoubted fact, that the evangelist also wrote his gospel in Greek, for the benefit and instruction of the great body of christians. Nor is this an unreasonable conclusion, since the Greek was the general and popular language of that age.

To establish, beyond all reasonable doubt, the genuineness and authenticity of St. Matthew's gospel, I need only refer you to a few of the early records which have been preserved on this subject. Barnabas, a companion and associate of St. Paul, refers directly to it in his Greek epistle, no less than *seven* times; Clemens, Bishop of Rome, another associate of Paul, refers to this gospel *twice* in his epistle to the Corinthians; Hermas, or Hermes, an associate of the apostles, refers to this gospel, in his work called the Shepherd, no less than *ten* times.—It is referred to *nine* times in the genuine epistles of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who was ordained to that charge by the apostle John; Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who was born about *thirty* years before

the death of John, the evangelist and apostle, refers to it *five* times in his epistle to the Philippians. In the time of Papius, who was supposed to be a disciple of St. John, it was well known, and is expressly ascribed to the evangelist by him, as well as by several other writers of the *first* century, who are quoted by Eusebius. In the *second* century it was quoted by Tatian, author of the Harmony of the Four Gospels—by Hegesippus, a Hebrew convert; by Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch—by Clemens, Bishop of Alexandria—and finally, by CELSUS, that sagacious and inquisitive enemy of the christian religion, whose testimony can never be suspected of any design to favor the cause of the gospel. Many later testimonies might be added, but they are unnecessary, since the earliest writers, both *for* and *against* christianity, have borne witness to the genuineness and authenticity of the history which was furnished by this evangelist.

Attempts have been made of late years, by several writers, to expunge the *first* and *second* chapters of this gospel, evidently for the purpose of avoiding the conclusion which they authorize of the miraculous conception of Christ. The evidences, however, of their genuineness, are too strong and clear to justify the hope of their success: For the manner in which the *third* chapter commences, naturally gives birth to the conclusion, that something was alluded to which went before.—“In those days, came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea.” In *those* days! In *what* days? This language renders it perfectly evident that the evangelist had written something before, to which he here refers: And this reference is to the preceding narrative, where he informs us that Jesus came from the city of Nazareth where he dwelt, to be baptized of John in Jordan.

Again, Horne, in his introduction to the critical study of the scriptures, asserts it as an indisputable fact, that “*the two first chapters of Matthew’s gospel,*

are to be found in *ALL* the ancient manuscripts now extant, which are entire, as well as in many that have come down to us, mutilated by the hand of time; and also in all the ancient versions without exception. Some of the manuscripts now extant, particularly the Vatican and Cambridge manuscripts, and the Codex Rescriptus in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, are undoubtedly of very high antiquity, bearing date from the fifth or sixth centuries at the latest, if they are not earlier. The versions carry us still higher. The *Peschito*, or Old Syriac, and what is called the Old Italic, are nearly coeval with the formation of the canon of the New Testament. The Coptic, Arabic, and other versions, also bear marks of high antiquity: and though some of them contain discrepancies of more or less moment from the copies generally received, yet *all* of them have this part of the Gospel of Matthew, as integral portions of the whole. To the genuineness of these chapters, as well as the whole book of Matthew, there are still other evidences—Clement, of Alexandria; Hegesippus, the converted Jew and ecclesiastical historian; Justin Martyr; Ignatius and Irenæus who flourished immediately after the apostolic age, and one of them during the life of St. John, all bear testimony to the genuineness of these chapters, as well as those in Luke's gospel, which contains the account of the miraculous generation of Christ: This they have done, by quoting the very language of these chapters.

Before we dismiss this subject, it may be expedient to notice a different class of evidences, which will place the fact for which we contend beyond all rational doubt.—Julian, the apostate, who wrote about the middle of the *fourth* century; Porphyry, who wrote in the *third* century, and Celsus, who wrote about the middle of the *second* century; all peculiarly distinguished in history for their bitter enmity to the name and faith of the christian religion, have left undeniable proof of the antiquity

and genuineness of the narratives of Matthew and Luke, which record the miraculous conception, by stating distinctly their objections to this part of the history of Christ. They appear not to have intimated a doubt as to the genuineness of the account, but on the other hand, they contended, that in writing the facts relating to this miracle, the evangelists either committed *errors* or related falsehoods. Here then, you have the testimony of apostles, evangelists, early preachers of the gospel, and the most determined opposers of the christian faith, to confirm the account of which we are speaking. And is it reasonable to suppose that both the friends and enemies of Christ would unite in the genuine character of this narrative, provided it was capable of being successfully controverted? No conclusion, whatever, could be more preposterous. If any farther evidence can be thought necessary to establish the genuineness of this narrative, it may be found in the writings of Epiphanius, as quoted by Dr. Lardner. I allude to what he states concerning Cerinthus, a disciple of Simon Magus; who was viewed with abhorrence by the apostle John. He flourished in the days of the apostles, and appears to have been the leader of a sect about *seventeen* years after the crucifixion of Christ. According to Epiphanius, Cerinthus received the gospel written by Matthew, though not the whole: "His followers *preferred it on account of its genealogy.*" Epiphanius adds—"it is ALLOWED by all THAT CERINTHUS MADE USE OF THE BEGINNING of *St. Matthew's Gospel*, and from thence endeavored to prove that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary." Here I beg leave to remark, that those who denied the miraculous conception of Christ, in primitive times, received and accredited those very chapters which contain that account; and that, for the purpose of justifying the conclusion that he was the literal son of Joseph: But modern unbelievers of the miraculous account of the conception, reject these chapters because they are convinced that they afford *prima facie* evidence that he was



produced by a miraculous generation. Thus it appears that ancient and modern *humanitarians* are at war upon the merits of what these chapters contain. We shall not attempt to decide this controversy, but leave them to settle the dispute among themselves.

In addition to all these decisive testimonies of the enemies of truth, it is a fact worthy of particular attention, that during all the heat of religious debate about speculative points, in the early centuries, no objections were ever brought against the genuineness of these chapters.—Hence I am led to conclude that their genuineness is clearly, fully and incontrovertibly established, by every kind of testimony which the most fastidious and skeptical disputant could require.

The history of Christ, as written by Mark, omits both the genealogy and miraculous conception ; the former being of less importance to the christians at Rome, by whose request he penned the gospel bearing his name. Nor is there any thing strange in his omission of the miraculous conception, when we reflect that his history does not contain the sermon on the mount, and is destitute of many of the parables, which the others contain. He was not an *eye* or *ear* witness of what Christ did and said ; but being a companion of Peter, and enjoying the advantages of his ministry, he wrote at the earnest solicitation of some christians at Rome, such facts relating to Christ, his actions and doctrine, as he thought of the greatest importance to their faith and practice. His gospel contains some particulars which are omitted by Matthew. This might well be expected, since he daily listened to the discourses of Peter, who was an eye-witness and apostle of Christ from the beginning — For we cannot in reason suppose that all the works and instructions of Christ, would be penned by *any*, or by *all* the apostles and ministers of the apostolic age. Indeed, the contrary is told us by St. John, at the close of his gospel.

All the early writers, who lived during and after the apostles, as well as those who wrote against

christianity, admit, and bear testimony to the genuineness of Mark's history. The precise period in which he wrote cannot be positively stated; though the best evidence which we can obtain, leads us to conclude that it was written about the year 61 or 62.

The next in course is the gospel of St. Luke.—This author is supposed to have been a Greek by birth, a proselyte to the Jewish religion, and afterwards a convert to christianity. According to Eusebius, he was a native of Antioch, and by profession, a physician, as may also be seen by the epistle of Paul to the Colossians, iv. 14. He was an associate of St. Paul, was present at his trial in Cæsarea, accompanied him in his journey to Rome, and was his companion during his imprisonment in that city. To the genuineness and authenticity of his gospel, all the early writers of note, bear an unanimous testimony. He likewise shared the honor, in common with Matthew, of having the genuineness of his gospel acknowledged by all the violent adversaries of the christian religion, for centuries. His writings present a beautiful specimen of elegant and correct narration, and evince his intimate acquaintance with the Hebrew scriptures.

The period at which Luke wrote his gospel is supposed to be about A. D. 63 or 64,—and from the best evidence that we can obtain, it was written in Greece, for the use and instruction of that nation.

The three evangelists whose gospels we have noticed, were undoubtedly strangers to the writings of each other, since verbal differences frequently occur when they are describing the same events.—This fact must, of course, free them from all just suspicion of having concerted any measure to impose on their readers. Their occasionally employing the same words, in recording the same facts, is a strong indication that the truths which they narrated were equally well known and familiar to them all.

The gospel according to St. John, next claims our attention. This writer was among the earliest of *Christ's chosen companions and apostles*, and was

the only apostle who was present at the time of his crucifixion. He was a native of Bethsaida, on the border of the sea of Gallilee. He enjoyed the advantage of being an eye-witness of what transpired in the life, and was a constant hearer of his Master. After suffering persecutions for the gospel, he died at Ephesus, A. D. 100, aged about 94 years. The best evidence which can be collected concerning the time of his gospel's being written, places it at the period of about 97 years from the birth of Christ.— Previous to the writing of this gospel, the histories of Matthew, Mark and Luke had been extensively circulated, which will readily account for his omitting many particulars which they contain, and supplying others in which they were deficient. Besides this, at the time of John's writing, the gospel had spread into far distant countries and nations, which suggested the necessity of particular explanations and facts, which are peculiar to this gospel history. Two heresies had also risen, and were spreading at this period; the one headed by Nicholas, and the other by Cerinthus. The influence of these, the apostle evidently designed to counteract by the general scope of his narrative and illustrations.

The evangelical history written by John, has been universally received as genuine, and has received the united testimony and approbation of all the early christian writers and historians. It is therefore unnecessary, as well as incompatible with the design and limits of this discourse, to enlarge upon its contents: I shall therefore only add, it is written for the most part, with great simplicity and perspicuity.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES has very justly been termed a *fifth gospel*, because it is the continuance of the gospel history, and forms the *fifth* and *last* historical book of the New Testament. It is rightly considered as a most valuable *postscript* to the gospel history, and forms the connecting link between the *gospels* and epistles of the New Testament.

*This book contains a valuable history of the lives*

of Peter and Paul, as also a faithful history of the christian church, in many particulars, from the ascension of Christ, down to the time of St. Paul's arrival at Rome, a period of about *thirty* years. It narrates the miracles and persecutions of the apostles, and the rapid increase of the church under their administration.

All the early writers have unanimously attested that it is the genuine production of St. Luke, the author of the *third* gospel history in the order of the New Testament. It is with good reason supposed to have been written about the year A. D. 63. This book has never been rejected upon the authority of any history, either ancient or modern. It is true that a few extravagant sects, as wild and enthusiastic as they were designing and dogmatical, rejected this book, on account of its contradicting their senseless dogmas: But all the credible and most respectable writers of antiquity confirm its genuineness and authenticity. *The Acts of the Apostles* abundantly confirms the truth of the *four* gospels, and the divine original of the christian religion.

Of the Epistles, which form so great a part of the New Testament, *fourteen* are ascribed to St. Paul. The history of his zeal in the Jew's religion, of his persecutions of the church of Christ, and of his miraculous conversion to christianity, are minutely recorded by St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles. I shall offer only a few remarks upon his epistles, as it would be a needless trespass upon your patience to enlarge upon each.

That he was a writer of great learning, abilities and zeal, is both evident from his epistles, and also universally acknowledged by men of the most approved talents.

All his epistles, except that to the Hebrews, were unanimously acknowledged by the best early writers in the christian church, to be genuine and authentic. His epistle to the Romans was supposed to be written from Corinth, about A. D. 57—A. C.

inthians from Ephesus, A. D. 57—II. Corinthians, from Philippi, A. D. 58. The epistle to the Galatians is supposed to have been written about A. D. 52 or 53; but where the apostle was when he wrote this letter is not positively known. The Epistle to the Ephesians was supposed to have been written from Rome, about the year 51.—That to the Philippians, about 52, and that to the Colossians, the same year, and both from Rome, while Paul continued in that city. The *first* epistle to the Thessalonians was supposed to have been written from Corinth, about the year 52, and the *second* epistle to the same church, from the same place, in the year 52 or 53. The *first* of Timothy was believed to have been written from Rome, in the year 64—and the *second* from the same place in the following year. The epistle to Titus is supposed to have been written from the same place in the year 64. The epistle to Philemon, was also believed by the ancient writers to have been written from Rome, in the year 62, or 63. The epistle to the Hebrews has been the subject of various conjectures, though its genuineness has never been disputed.—The balance of evidence, however, has greatly preponderated in favor of the opinion that it was written by St. Paul, insomuch, that the best informed of all the early writers and historians have confidently expressed their belief that it was written by the great apostle of the Gentiles: And it is supposed to have been written about the year 64, from Rome, or some part of Italy.

The epistle bearing the name of *James*, is confidently ascribed to James the *less*, who is called by historians, as by the scriptures, the brother of Christ. Although the canonical authority of this epistle has been doubted, yet the fact of its being placed in the Syriac version of the New Testament, which was executed in the *first* century, is a circumstance which can leave little doubt on the candid mind of its genuineness and authenticity; or that it was written in the apostolic age.

*The genuineness and canonical authority of the*

*first* epistle of Peter, have never been disputed. It was supposed to have been written about the year 64. The *second* epistle, bearing this apostle's name, has been questioned by some; but the evidence of its genuineness and authenticity, when properly weighed, we think, are sufficient to silence every objection which can be started against it. The period in which it was written, is supposed to have been just before the apostle's death, in the year 65.

The *first* epistle of John is distinctly cited by Polycarp, who was born about *thirty* years before the death of this apostle;—Papias, supposed to be a disciple of St. John, Ireneus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Eusebius, Athanasius, and all the subsequent writers of ecclesiastical history, as well as those who employed themselves in writing for the instruction of posterity, on the New Testament, have declared this epistle to be genuine. It is supposed to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and addressed to christians in general: Hence it is called a *catholic* epistle. The *second* and third epistles, which bear the name of John, were doubted by some of the early fathers of the church, and are not received by the Syrian churches. Yet they were never suspected of containing any thing untrue, or inconsistent with christianity. They were received by many of the early and eminent successors of the apostles, as genuine: And it cannot be denied that they contain very strong internal evidence of having been the productions of this apostle. The style and subjects of the *second*, are the same as those of the first epistle. The third is of a more local character, though it is a clear and forcible commendation of hospitality; which is the fruit of charity or love, the general theme of the two foregoing epistles.—These last were addressed to private individuals, and are supposed to have been written about the year 65 and 69.

The epistle of Jude was rejected by several persons in the early ages of the church, on account of the reference which it contains to some apocryphal

writings; but it was received by the most learned and able writers, and is supported by the most respectable authority. It is found in all the ancient catalogues of the writings of the New Testament. It is declared to be genuine, by Clement of Alexandria, and is quoted as the production of Jude, by Tertullian, Origen, and by a majority of the ancients, noticed by Eusebius. This epistle is supposed to have been written between the years 65 and 70.

The genuineness of the Apocalypse or Revelation to St. John, was never called in question till the *third* century. It was largely commented upon by the early christians, and acknowledged to have been written by St. John. In the *third* century it was called in question by a few individuals who were engaged in opposing some extravagant views of the Millennium, which were thought to have been drawn from this book. It was evidently received by the "Shepherd of Hermas"—by Ignatius, Polycarp, and Papias; all contemporaries with St. John; besides these, Justin Martyr, Mileto, Ireneus, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Apollonius, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and the Asiatic churches, all, in the *second* century, acknowledged and used the apocalypse as the genuine production of John the Apostle. In a word; it is pronounced by the ablest modern critics, to be more fully defended and supported as the genuine and authentic production of St. John, than are the writings of any other of the apostles and evangelists contained in the New Testament. This book is supposed to have been written at Ephesus, in the year 96 or 97.

I have now briefly noticed the several Books of the New Testament, and laid before you some of the plain and forcible evidences of their genuineness and authenticity. The facts of the existence, conduct, writings, and religious professions of these witnesses, are too plain and evident to be doubted. And here let me ask,—are not these writings replete with simplicity, fairness and candor? Do they not contain the purest rules for the practice of all the

moral and social virtues which could elevate the human character, or conduce to the happiness of intelligent beings? Are not the prospects and hopes which they hold up to view of such a nature as to excite the most genuine and exalted piety to God, and the most extensive benevolence to man? Were not the early disciples plainly told by Christ, that they would be most cruelly persecuted and destroyed for embracing and professing his religion? After being apprized of all these dangers and sufferings, did they not, without any prospects of earthly gain or happiness, boldly encounter all these sufferings and privations, by a steady perseverance in his religion and doctrine? and can you see the least appearance in all this, of any motive which they could possibly have for adhering to the religion of their Master, unless they possessed the fullest and most incontrovertible evidence that its authority was divine? These questions admit of but one answer. They had witnessed the stupendous miracles of Christ, and were blessed with the same divine power, after his resurrection and ascension. They knew that their religion was of God, and contemplating its vast and benevolent design, they were fired with a zeal and power, which bade defiance to the malice of men, and the gates of hell.

In the condition and temporal prospects of those who penned the history and furnished the epistles of the New Testament, there is not a single circumstance which can induce the suspicion that they could have been under the influence of any motive to deceive mankind by giving publicity to falsehood. For it is well known to every reader of history, that the defence of christianity was an enterprise which required incessant exertion and extreme hazard.—Whoever enlisted under the banner of the cross, was aware that he entered the field of danger, where fearful hosts of Jews and gentiles were arrayed in hostile armor, and determined to exterminate a religion so wounding to the pride of their *hearts*, and which demanded the unconditional



surrender of all their sinful gratifications. Hence the dangers to which the profession of faith in Christ exposed all its conscientious adherents, was too obvious to be mistaken, and too palpable to escape the notice of the most superficial minds.

The evidence, that such would be the inevitable consequence of the profession of christianity, was as plain and as certain to their minds as the truth and authority of their religion ; for it had been taught them by the Son of God, in language unequivocal. That they experienced its truth, we are fully certified, by writers of undoubted credit, both christian and heathen. The Acts of the Apostles contains a record of the violence with which the disciples and early followers of Christ were persecuted, soon after the resurrection and ascension of their illustrious Leader. And in addition to the testimony there furnished, the pages of all the early christian historians contain ample proof of the various sufferings and persecutions which the primitive disciples endured for the name and religion of their Master.— But to place this subject beyond the reach of doubt or of controversy, we have only to add, that Tacitus, the Roman historian, as well as other pagan writers, has placed this fact in the clearest light, by reciting the story of their wrongs and their martyrdom. The rigorous and inhuman treatment which the christians received, merely for their profession of faith, is a prominent feature in the history of the Roman empire, for the space of *three hundred years* from the birth of Christ. Nor is there any point more fully established by these writers and historians, than that the simple circumstance of a man's confession that he was a christian, was sufficient to bring upon him the punishment of death ; so that those who were known, or even suspected of being christians, were exposed to all those dangers and sufferings which are the most repulsive to the feelings and sensibilities of human nature.

*It is well known that the Roman government was distinguished for its liberality to the religious pre-*

judices of every country which submitted to its arms and its power, and practised upon the principles of toleration beyond the example of any preceding monarchy. But the cause of this indulgence is easily traced to the similarity which obtained in the superstitious rites and ceremonies of every pagan country, over which its victories had extended. The Romans themselves were pagans, and recognised the leading and ostensible features of their own religion, through all the provinces which they had conquered, save that of Judea. And as it was an universal acknowledgment of paganism, that every country had its own gods, they could not depart from the principle of toleration, without violating the most essential article of their own creed. This caused them to respect the religion of all pagan countries, and to feel themselves bound to practise the rites of worship in every country where they happened to sojourn. In this, they did not abandon their own religion, nor sacrifice any principle by the respect and reverence which they paid to the religion and worship of other countries.

The religion of the Jews gave no alarm to the Roman government; for their strong attachment to their own system, and the contempt and detestation with which they viewed the religions of pagan Rome, rendered them unsocial, and objects of pity and disgust, rather than of jealousy and alarm to the Roman government; so that their excessive vanity and superstition were too uninviting to divert the heathen from their attachments to pagan idolatry. For these and similar reasons, they were permitted to enjoy their religious rites, unmolested.

With the Christians, however, the case was far different. Their zeal and diligence in propagating their religion, excited the alarm of the Jews, and drew upon them the vengeance of the Scribes and Pharisees. The rapidity with which their principles spread throughout Judea, was the signal for persecution and death. This led the first christians to visit more distant regions, and to proclaim the

truths of the gospel to the gentiles. When the Roman government became acquainted with its high pretensions, and were apprized of the zeal and activity of its advocates—when they saw to what an extent its principles were received; that it aimed at the utter subversion of all idolatry, and that the temples of pagan superstition were beginning to be deserted; they were alarmed for the safety of their religious institutions, and therefore commenced the work of persecution, with a view to exterminate what they termed an *extravagant* and *pestilent superstition*.

Many of those who were the subjects of these violent persecutions, were among the apostles and first disciples of Christ; were the subjects of his immediate instruction; listened to his discourses; saw him perform his miracles; witnessed his trial and condemnation, and saw him after he had risen from the dead. To a few of them, the gift of miracles was imparted, and frequent revelations were afforded, to encourage and inspire them with comfort amidst the trials and sufferings to which they were exposed, in the defence and dissemination of the gospel. They were the authors of the writings which are contained in the New Testament. The fortitude, the constancy and firmness with which they met and sustained the dreadful sufferings which their unfeeling persecutors inflicted, excited, indeed, the astonishment of their tormentors, but was mistaken for the most criminal obstinacy and indifference to life. These facts are too well authenticated to admit of contradiction or doubt; since they are recorded by both the friends and enemies of the gospel.

A most rational and serious inquiry, therefore, presents itself for our solution. It is admitted, for it cannot be denied, that the profession of christianity was sure to entail suffering and disgrace; not only in Judea, but throughout the whole Roman empire. And those who embraced the faith of the christian religion were sure to be regarded as an in-

fatuated, despised and miserable people. They could have no hope of worldly honor or distinction, nor could they anticipate any temporal advantage from attaching themselves to a religion which waged an indiscriminate war with the religion of the whole pagan world, and at the same time imposed its stern restraints upon all the unholy passions and desires of the human heart. It promised them none of that glory which encircles the brow of the patriot and the hero, but exposed them, not only to derision and insolence, but to the charge of contemptible folly and madness. It has been well observed by an able author in defence of christianity, that "A name and reputation in the world might sustain the dying moments of Socrates or Regulus; but what earthly principles can account for the intrepidity of those poor and miserable outcasts, who consigned themselves to a voluntary martyrdom in the cause of their religion?" With all these circumstances in full view before us, let us bring the question home to every heart: What possible inducement could the writers of the New Testament have had to impose these writings upon the world, if they knew them to be false? And this they must have known, if the things which they recorded did not actually transpire. To submit to all the sufferings of a bloody and unsparing persecution, and that in defence of what they knew to be a groundless imposture, would have been a species of madness and insanity, without a parallel in the history of all ages! But have they written like mad-men, or like men, laboring under the influence of mental alienation? Do not their writings rather demonstrate that they enjoyed clearness of intellect, soundness of understanding, soberness of reflection, conviction of duty, and a deep devotion of heart and purpose, to the honor of God and the moral and religious improvement of mankind? These characteristics are too plain and palpable in all their productions to admit of denial.

Again, they voluntarily suffered martyrdom for what they wrote and taught—and it has universally been admitted that martyrdom is an incontrovertible evidence of the sincerity of those who submit to its sufferings. I shall probably be told, in reply, that men have suffered martyrdom in defence of principles which are directly opposite in their character. This is readily admitted; and it only proves that those who thus suffered, truly and unquestionably believed the sentiments which they espoused, and were sincerely devoted to the defence of their principles. The martyrdom of archbishop Cranmer afforded undoubted evidence of his sincere and conscientious rejection of what he conceived to be the errors of the papal creed, and of his thorough conviction of opposite sentiments. The martyrdom of Michael Servetus, in pursuance of the decision of the council of Geneva, carried undeniable proof of his sincerity in the belief of the sentiments which he had espoused: But neither of these cases proves the correctness of the sentiments which they embraced and maintained; it only proves that they sincerely believed the doctrines which they advanced, without the positive knowledge that they were in all respects true. It therefore shows, that a man may be sincere, and yet be laboring under a mistake: That the errors which he embraces may exert an influence to induce him to suffer in their defence, in the same manner as if they were sanctioned by demonstrative evidence.

These acknowledgments, however, afford no conclusion that the apostles and primitive christians suffered in the defence of what they only *believed* or *supposed* to be true; for they suffered in attestation of what they *saw* and *heard*; of what their senses took cognizance; and not merely of what their understandings took cognizance, as a matter of opinion or belief. They heard the preaching and saw the miracles of Christ for its confirmation; nay, more, *they were with him after his resurrection from the dead, and therefore must have known the truth*

of what they declared. Their sufferings, therefore, furnished the incontrovertible evidence, not only of the *sincerity* of their faith, but of the *truth* and *certainly* of what they proclaimed.

The miracles which these witnesses performed, and by which they commended their message to the confidence of the multitude, stand forth as an imperishable monument of the divine authority of what they wrote and taught. \* These writings are bequeathed us as an invaluable legacy, containing a transcript of the will of God, the standard of evangelical faith, and a most ample and perfect directory in all the important duties which devolve upon us, in our relation to the Supreme Being, and to all the creatures of his forming hand. It is the glorious charter of immortality, the pledge of eternal life.

To reject the truth of what these writings contain, is to renounce the hope of all which can sustain our hearts under the severest conflicts of life, and which can support our courage amidst the sharpest trials which were ever allotted for the experience of human nature. But why do we talk of their rejection? Do they contain any thing offensive to reason, or to the purest morality, which ever refined and elevated the character of man? It cannot be pretended, with the least semblance of justice; for the opposite character has always been awarded to these writings, even by the most violent opposers of revealed religion.

The writings of the New Testament contain a clear and interesting description of the third and last dispensation of infinite wisdom and goodness, by which the glorious designs of Heaven are unfolded to man, and by whose instructions we are furnished with the rules of every moral and social duty, together with a most shining and forcible example of all those important virtues, in the life and character of the distinguished Founder of our religion. The great object of his life was that of *improving the condition of man, and of elevating and*

refining the sensibilities of our common nature. They teach us, in a clear and impressive manner, that the centre to which all his designs and actions tended, was that of releasing mankind from the bondage of ignorance, superstition and vice, and of conforming the manners and habits of the intelligent family of God to rules of the most exalted piety and virtue.

To this worthy end, and for the security of this ennobling design, he combined the purest precepts with the most perfect example. Never has a character been presented to the world so amiable and godlike, and at the same time, so equally distant from the phrenzy of enthusiasm, the craft of imposture, and the haughty indifference of stoical pride. His example was the most perfect exhibition of holiness; of devotion to the honor of God; of zeal for the glory of the great Creator; of ardent solicitude for the improvement and happiness of man; of charity and kindness; of sympathy and love; of condescension and forbearance; of meekness, humility and self-denial.

The religion which he taught, was totally unconnected with all the schemes of human policy: It is true that it forcibly inculcated the duty of submission to human laws, but it never sought to seat its votaries in the chair of civil and political authority: on the contrary, it openly proclaimed a *kingdom* which was *not of this world!* It directed all its energies to extinguish the flame of every unholy passion of the heart, and sought to elevate the human mind above the grovelling propensities which enslave the noble powers of the soul, check the spontaneous flow of charity, and obstruct the gentle currents of benignity, peace and universal kindness; so unspeakably auspicious to the welfare of man. The exalted views which the writings of the New Testament inculcate, of the character and government of God, are such as to commend themselves to our reason; as they are worthy of the most excellent of all possible beings, and such as to excite

our highest reverence, since they give birth to the most sincere affections of the soul, and call forth the liveliest emotions of gratitude, confidence and joy. They represent him as a Father, of universal benignity, whose mercy and grace, like the blessings of his providence, flow free and unconfined, to all the creatures of his hand, throughout the universe. They make us acquainted with our duty to him as the children of his love; point out the path of improvement and happiness, and furnish us with a knowledge of the wise and perfect design for which we were created. If they taught the unrestrained indulgence of the gross propensities of human nature; if they justified oppression and violence; if they encouraged fraud and injustice; if they allowed of persecution and intolerance; if they gave countenance to falsehood and deceit; if they sanctioned indifference to the practice of any moral and social virtue, or afforded a license to the indulgence of sin, in thought, word or deed; we might feel ourselves excusable in rejecting their instructions: But their morality is, on the contrary, so pure, simple, exalted and refined, as to leave us without excuse, provided we reject their wholesome admonitions, and heed not their holy and authoritative precepts. In a word; they are "a light to our feet and a lamp to our path," to direct us into all the counsels of wisdom and truth; and while they point out to us the dangers of our way, and solemnly admonish us to "shun every appearance of evil," they communicate to us the knowledge of God and his will, thoroughly furnish us unto every good word and work, and supply all the means which will enable us to become "wise unto salvation."



## LECTURE XIV.

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ST. JOHN, x. 20, 21.

"And many of them said, He hath a devil and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

Among the Jews, various impressions were produced by the preaching and miracles of Jesus.—Some supposed him to be one of the ancient prophets, returned to the abode of mortals, for the purpose of instructing mankind in the perfect knowledge of divine truth, and to demonstrate its authority by the most wonderful deeds: Others, that he was John the Baptist, risen from the dead, to display the mighty power of God. A third class were jealous that he was an ambitious and designing politician, seeking to overthrow the laws and customs of the Jews, and to establish a new order of government. Another class supposed him to be the Son of God, the Messiah, whose character and labors had been the theme of so many of the ancient prophets—while the more envious and bigotted declared that he had a devil and was mad. Thus we see that those who rejected the Prince of Peace, and the glorious truths which he taught and enforced, were actuated by different motives, which gave birth to variety in the character of their objections.

Between the skeptics of the *first* century, and those of our own times, there is, in some respects, a striking dissimilarity. Those who then rejected the doctrine and divine authority of the Saviour, admitted the reality of those astonishing miracles which he performed; but skeptics at this day allege the history of these miracles as an excuse for rejecting the system of revealed religion. This new attitude, *therefore*, of the opposers of divine revelation, renders it necessary for us to enter into the merits of

the evidence by which the miracles of Christ and his apostles are set forth and defended.

A *miracle*, in its common and most appropriate signification, denotes some effect which is produced by means that are contrary to the well known and established constitution and course of things ; such as a sensible and obvious deviation from the known laws of nature. Or, in other words, it is an effect produced, aside from, and independent of, the ordinary laws which are established in the physical universe.

The history which contains an account of the miracles of Christ and his followers, has been assailed with more violence and zeal, than reason and sober reflection.

Censure, of the most exceptionable character, devoid, alike, of sound reason and philosophy, is generally employed to intimidate the young and inexperienced mind. Modern skeptics appear to think that an unblushing charge of falsehood and deception is sufficient to ensure their triumph ; especially if it be accompanied with a few sallies of satirical wit. But the sober exercise of reason will readily dissipate this illusion, and bring our minds to the more consistent employment of investigating the evidence of simple and well attested facts.

What evidence, or even argument, have they ever brought forward to prove that Christ and his apostles did not perform the miracles which are recorded in the New Testament ? None. They rest their whole cause on a simple denial of the fact. They indeed attempt to justify this denial, by appealing to the frauds which have been practised by vile and arrogant pretenders. But this appeal is a tacit acknowledgment, on their part, that genuine miracles have been performed ; since no man would ever attempt an imitation of what never existed in reality. No fraud which was ever attempted will compare with the plain, but stupendous miracles of Christ and his apostles. They were not performed under the cover of darkness ; no previous notice was giv-

en that they would be wrought ; no long train of preparations was announced, to excite the gaze of the multitude. They were totally unlike the tricks of jugglers, for they were never performed except in cases where real benevolence required the display of almighty power. The *first* miracle of Christ was performed to give a divine sanction of approbation to the institution of marriage : an institution which is of universal importance to the peace, the prosperity, and the good order of society : an institution which has been held sacred by all civilized nations, and deemed indispensable even by the wildest barbarians ; and were it now to be set aside and disregarded, it would immediately plunge mankind into a state of more deplorable barbarity than that which ever reigned among the tribes of our western wilds, or brutalized the hordes of Afric's burning sands. The miracles of Christ were generally performed in large assemblies, in the presence of his disciples, and in presence of those who sought occasion to revile and persecute him. In presence of thousands, he healed the lepers with a word ; removed the palsy ; gave sight to those that were born blind ; restored hearing to the deaf ; bade the burning fever retire ; restored the withered hand, and raised the dead to life ! How totally unlike the tricks of jugglers and mountebanks, were the miracles of the great Redeemer. They were performed at times and places, and under circumstances, which precluded the possibility of any deception. They were witnessed by the priests and rulers of the Jews, as well as by the whole multitude who came together to obtain instruction, or gratify their curiosity. They were repeated and multiplied by the apostles, in the name, and by the authority of their Master, after his resurrection from the dead. They were performed upon such subjects as to remove all suspicion of fraud, and to defy all the arts of *denial* or *evasion*. Indeed, so obvious and undeniable were these miracles, that the Jews, with all their prejudice, envy and bitterness, did not pre-

tend to deny, but acknowledged their truth. It is true that they attributed them to the power and influence of the *prince of devils*, but never presumed to call in question the fact of their being performed. Celsus, who lived but a few years after the apostles, notwithstanding his laborious efforts to bring the christian religion into discredit and contempt, did not venture to deny, but acknowledged that the miracles recorded by the apostles were really performed; and therefore found himself under the necessity of admitting the divine authority of that religion, or of seeking some other way to account for their performance. This he found means to accomplish, by attributing them to the power of *magic*! The learned skeptics, Porphyry and Julian, who succeeded him in the ranks of infidelity, patterned after his example, and attributed them to the same cause. Thus you see, my hearers, that the *devil* and *magic*, were as indispensable to keep the cause of infidelity in countenance; in the early ages of the gospel, as was the goddess Diana to the wealth of the craftsmen of Ephesus.

Some modern unbelievers, aware of these difficulties, have adopted a shorter method to dispose of the evidence of the miracles of the gospel, as well as the whole history of the christian religion, by denying that the histories were written till several hundred years after the events were said to transpire: Such persons, however, only expose their want of historical information, and bring disgrace and confusion into the ranks of the party which they are labouring to keep in countenance.

Occasionally there have been those who have denied the possibility of miracles: But these men probably are not aware that this assertion is a denial of the power of God, and therefore proves them to be Atheists. For admitting the existence of a Supreme Being, his power must be unlimited; therefore, to say that unlimited power cannot produce an effect aside from, and independent of the *ordinary laws* which this power has established in

nature, is a contradiction in terms. This bold presumption betrays the most singular want of reflection: For where were the ordinary laws of *reproduction*, before the vegetable and animal creation were brought into being by the fiat of the Almighty? Will it be pretended that the *first* man and woman,—that the *first pairs* of all the animal creation,—that the *first* of all the plants and trees which adorn and beautify the globe, were produced by no other than the ordinary laws by which they are now multiplied? And if they were not produced by these laws, can any man unless he outrages every principle of reason, deny that they were produced by the immediate effort of divine and almighty power, independent of the ordinary laws of nature?—No man, denying the truth of miracles, will attempt either to answer these plain questions, or justify his unbelief, without resorting to the folly and madness of denying the existence of God, and taking shelter in the fearful vortex of Atheistical infidelity.

I will now submit a few plain and simple inquiries to such as deny the miracles of the New Testament, which I trust will enable them to discover the feebleness of their attempts to overthrow their truth and divine authority. In looking over the history of these miracles, is it not evident that they were produced by a power infinitely superior to that of man? Were they not of a character, at once the most dignified, generous, disinterested, humane and benevolent? Were they not appealed to as an evidence of the divine authority of the doctrine of Christ and his apostles? Were they not performed in such an open and public manner as to preclude the possibility of any artifice or fraud? Did not those men who were convinced of the miracles and doctrine of Christ, abandon the pursuits of wickedness, conform to the most rigid rules of moral virtue and self-denial, and hazard both their lives, and their temporal prospects of interest and ease to become *the disciples* and followers of Christ? How is it possible, then, to account for all this change in their

conduct and pursuits, unless they possessed the fullest evidence that these astonishing works were performed by divine power, and that the doctrine of Christ was stamped with the seal of divine authority? And finally, why did not the learned hosts of Jews and Pagans attack and refute the story of these miracles, which were immediately published to the world, constantly appealed to by the disciples, and urged as an ample justification of their faith in Christ, if it was in their power to disprove them, instead of resorting to persecution and death, as the only probable means which held out to them the most distant prospect of success in their opposition to the gospel? These are questions which the enemies of revelation will never approach with any design to furnish a single answer which reason or philosophy can approve. And now, with all these evidences of the truth and holy authority of the gospel of the Son of God, skeptics would fain attempt to persuade us to reject the only religion which can direct us in the paths of innocence and peace, enlarge our hopes and purify our lives; and, that too, without affording a particle of evidence that this religion is not based upon the revealed will and purpose of the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth.

Passing from the miracles of the New Testament, we deem it expedient to notice a common and trite objection, which is urged against the gospel, on account of the difference which appears in the genealogical tables, recorded by Matthew and Luke. It is well known that there is a difference of several generations, in tracing them up to their original head. From this fact, modern infidels have taken the liberty to condemn the whole gospel history. But let us examine this objection fairly: Against what does it rest? Does it have any bearing against the narrative of the birth, life, labors, miracles, doctrine, death or resurrection of Christ? It is perfectly evident that it does not: Nor will I insult your understandings so much as to adduce any arguments to

refute such an inconsistent and gratuitous pretence. We again inquire, against what does this objection rest? I answer—against nothing, except the *tables* of genealogy which were kept by the Jews, and from which the evangelists derived their authority for this part of their narratives.

Again—the difference of design, between these evangelists, will readily account for the disparity between their genealogies, which comprise a period of *four thousand years*, from Adam, to Joseph and Mary. Matthew's genealogy was obviously designed for the benefit of the Jews; it "therefore traces the pedigree of Jesus Christ, as the promised seed, downwards from Abraham to David, and from him through Solomon's line to Jacob, the father of Joseph, who was the reputed or *legal* father of Christ. Matt. i. 1–16. That given by Luke was evidently intended for the *Gentiles*: it therefore reverses the order, tracing the pedigree upwards, from Heli, the father of Mary, through the line of Nathan, instead of Solomon, and from Nathan to Abraham, and from him, up to Adam, who was produced by the miraculous power of God. Whoever will take the trouble of tracing the genealogy recorded by St. Luke, will readily discover that he was tracing the pedigree of Mary; while it is equally obvious that Matthew was tracing the pedigree of Joseph. Thus the mighty objection about which Deists and Atheists have harped with so much confidence, resolves itself either into the imperfection of those Jewish tables from which these evangelists drew their records, or the difference which really existed in the lines through which the genealogies of Joseph and Mary were traced. Of the imperfection of the record which St. Mathew used, there can be no rational doubt, since three generations are omitted in that genealogy, between Joram and Ozias, as may be seen by consulting the books of the Chronicles.

These are the principal objections which have been urged, and depended upon by modern skeptical writers, and it is easy to discover their weak-

ness. They are objections which the Jews never thought it prudent to prefer, nor did the pagans venture to depend on their force, in opposing the progress of the gospel.

Before we dismiss the subject of objections, it is expedient to notice one which is founded upon the apparent difficulties attending the account of the resurrection of Christ. It is obvious that the historians harmonize in their relations concerning the time of the crucifixion, as also concerning the period in which the Saviour is said to have risen from the dead. The fact, however, of such an event, is both doubted and disputed. It has never been denied by the opposers of revelation, at least, by those who credit the voice of history, that Christ was crucified in a public manner, and that he expired upon the cross, as is set forth by the Evangelists. Nor can it be admitted by any man of sober reflection, that the envious Jews would permit him to escape from the suffering and death to which he was condemned, when he was fairly placed within their power.

It must appear evident to every reader of the New Testament, that a very great importance was attached to this single fact in the history of Christ.

It had been the theme of ancient prophecy, and so clearly predicted by Isaiah, in the *fifty-third* chapter of the revelations which were made to him, that every attentive, inquiring and unprejudiced mind could easily discover that this event must transpire, and that it was embraced in the mission of the Son of God. It was foretold by the Saviour himself, that he should be betrayed and crucified, and that on the *third* day he should rise again.

This declaration was remembered by his enemies, who had been actively engaged to procure his condemnation. They therefore adopted such measures and employed such means as they thought necessary to prevent the occurrence of imposture, and to preclude the possibility of any deception or fraud.



on the part of his disciples. They had witnessed the tragical scene of his death, and appear to have been unmoved and unsubdued by all the astonishing phenomena which attended his expiring moments. For though the splendors of the king of day had been veiled for the space of *three long hours*, in which the Prince of glory hung upon the fatal tree; though the earth was moved with convulsive pangs, to witness the presence of the dread sovereign of the universe, still their hearts remained under the fatal spell of moral darkness and revenge. They therefore repaired to the governor of Judea, declaring that they remembered hearing this immaculate sufferer, whom they branded as a *deceiver*, announce before his crucifixion, that in *three days* he should rise again: And to counteract every deceptive purpose, they begged permission to seal the tomb, and place a guard at the door of the sepulchre, assigning as a reason, their fears, lest his disciples should come and steal him away, and report that he had risen from the dead.

They obtained permission to render all secure, to the utmost extent of human means: But mark the great event which frustrated all their dark designs and realized the truth of his predictions. The third, the appointed day, began to dawn upon the mountains of Judea, when the eventful moment of his triumph approaches! A messenger from God descends to earth, which trembles in convulsions at his approach! The ponderous stone removes from the entry of the tomb, and the Mighty Captive comes forth from the bed of death with all the renewed energies of life, and exemplifies the glorious doctrine of immortality in his victorious conquest of the king of terrors! Sentinels shrink at the presence of his glory and become as dead men! The moment of triumph to the powers of darkness is ended in the indescribable confusion of his foes; and the friends of the suffering and innocent Redeemer *again* rejoice and experience a rekindling of all *their better* hopes: for He that was dead, and alive

again, afforded them the ocular demonstrations of his triumphant resurrection from the tomb.

Recovered from their consternation and dread, the guards repair to the city and inform the chief Priests of the astonishing event which had transpired. These priests bribe them to report that his disciples had stolen him away while they slept! The temptation succeeded, and this strange report obtained such an extensive credit, that it is even employed in the *nineteenth century*, to delude the unwary, and to cast suspicion and odium upon the christian cause.

As weak and absurd as this wicked pretence must appear to every candid and reflecting mind; the circumstance of its being employed to oppose the divine authority of the Saviour's doctrine and mission, renders it necessary to treat it with sobriety, and meet and effectually explode it with facts which are afforded by the story itself. It is admitted on the part of our opposers themselves, that this guard was composed of Roman soldiers, who were under the discipline and laws of the Roman empire. These laws prescribed the punishment of *death* for a soldier on guard, who should be convicted of sleeping upon his post. The story itself affords sufficient evidence that these soldiers were aware of this fact; for in addition to the sum of money which they offered them as a *reward* for the propagation of this story, they found it necessary to use *persuasion*, and finally to *promise* them that if this account came to the ears of the Governor, they would persuade him and rescue them. Thus you see that the account itself refutes the idle story of his having been stolen by his disciples.

But let us examine this case still further, that we may investigate a little closer, the character of this testimony, as to its credibility. They come forward as witnesses to criminate the disciples of Christ, and directly charge them with *stealing* the body of Jesus from the sepulchre: And is this report entitled to *credit*? Is it reasonable to suppose that a few timid

and unarmed disciples would hazard such an enterprise as that of approaching a strong guard of veteran soldiers, break the seal, roll away the stone, and remove the body of their Master; or that they could execute all this without meeting with any resistance from the guard? This story is certainly too preposterous to urge upon rational and ingenuous minds; and it evidently appeared so to the chief priests and the soldiers; for it is obvious that they must have suffered the punishment of cowards for permitting the body to be removed; and that these priests would have been among the foremost and most clamorous of their accusers. Pilate would have been urged to inflict the most exemplary punishment upon them for such an unpardonable violation of duty. In a word; such cowardice in a guard of Roman soldiers would have cost them their lives. All these facts were doubtless as evident to them as to us,—and to obviate this objection to their testimony, we shall doubtless be told that the sentinels were all fast locked in the arms of slumber, and therefore incapable of resistance: But this plea is still more unfortunate for the character of the witnesses than the former. To show the weakness and folly of this pretence, let us institute a court of inquiry. A charge of *theft* is preferred against the disciples, and these military watchmen are summoned as witnesses. They are interrogated as to what they know about the body of Jesus, which by some means has been removed from the tomb. Here let the Court inquire—Witnesses, were you employed on guard at the tomb of Joseph, where the body of one Jesus was deposited for safe-keeping? *Answer*; We were.—*Question*: Has that body been removed from the place where it was deposited? *Answer*; It has.—*Question*: By what means was it removed? *Answer*; His disciples came on the eve of the first day of the week and bore the body away from the tomb.—*Question*: Did they come armed, and in such numbers as to render all the resistance of your force ineffectual? *Answer*; They did not oppose us with any force, whatever! *Question*: By

what means then, did they obtain the body? *Answer*; they *stole* it, while we were *all asleep*!—*Question*: But how could you know that the disciples of Jesus *stole* and bore away his body, if you were all asleep? This question confounds the witnesses at once: They perceive the impossibility attending the belief of their story, and stand convicted of perjury.

Now what is the evidence that Christ did actually rise from the dead? We answer—He appeared to his eleven apostles, to some of those venerable matrons who had ministered to his necessities before his crucifixion, and finally, to more than FIVE HUNDRED witnesses at one time, the greater part of whom were alive upon the earth, and could be appealed to in confirmation of the fact,—for the greater part of them were still living, so late as the period in which St. Paul wrote his *first* epistle to the Corinthians; bearing date about *twenty-four* years after the event of the resurrection transpired. In addition to the testimony of all these eye-witnesses, the apostles gave evidence of the fact, wherever they were employed in the ministry of reconciliation, by the infallible sign of miracles, performed in the name of their risen Redeemer. No stronger proof could be necessary to establish this important truth; nor was any other required to silence every objection to the doctrine of the resurrection and a future immortal existence.

Having, as I trust, settled the question of the resurrection, by fair and rational evidence, I shall devote a passing notice to a few objections of a different character, or rather unreasonable pleas, which are employed in extenuation of unbelief. We are told by opponents to the gospel, that if the religion taught by Christ were true, and susceptible of clear and convincing proof, all its professors would be of one sentiment; that there would be no discord nor division among them; but all would be harmony and peace. We reply—that for a time, this was the *state of the christian church*, and it continued in

this tranquil condition, until a few headstrong enthusiasts, who had become "wise in their own conceits, and wise above what was written," assumed the responsibility of departing from the simplicity of the gospel: From that period, divisions arose among christians, and the pernicious example has been followed to the present day. Notwithstanding these divisions, however, christians of all denominations are still agreed upon nearly all the essential truths of the gospel; and entirely agreed in acknowledging that the scriptures are the only standard of religious faith and practice.

But the plea which we are considering supposes that whatever is true, and susceptible of rational evidence, will admit of no dispute or division of opinion. The application of this hypothesis, however, will sufficiently expose its absurdity. There were never two histories published of the same people and of the same events, which were in all respects precisely the same: And of course, among the readers of these different histories, there would be a corresponding difference of opinion. But does this fact justify the conclusion that we ought to reject all historical descriptions, and contentedly sit down in ignorance of other men, of other countries and of other times? Again—No system of philosophy ever obtained credit in the world, about the interpretation of whose principles there has not existed some difference of opinion: And pray, are we to abandon and discard philosophy, merely because men always have, and still do continue to differ about the meaning of some of the terms which it employs in explaining its principles? What science has ever been taught, whose character is not such as to admit of mathematical demonstration, which has not been the subject of controversy? There is none—and would it not be deemed madness in us to reject and despise history, and all the sciences, merely on account of men's differing in opinion concerning them? *There can be but one answer to this question; for every man of the least reflection and intelligence*

must instantly decide, that their rejection, on account of any trifling disagreement about the meaning of the terms in which they are conveyed, would be the height of folly and absurdity.

The same principle and reasoning will apply, and with still greater force, to the christian religion.—Its history comes to us from a foreign language, which is capable, in many instances, of a variety of meaning: that is; many of the original words may be so translated, as to give birth to different sentiments, as to the meaning of the author, though the general scope of the author's meaning will be readily and fairly comprehended by every class of his readers. From this difference in the interpretation of readers, has originated the variety of sentiment which characterizes the christian world at the present day. And would it not be the extreme of rashness to reject the only system which holds out the hope of immortality and eternal life, because a trifling difference of opinion is entertained concerning the meaning of the words in which a few of its doctrines are conveyed,—and more especially so, since we refuse to lay aside any other science for the same reason? If the gospel is to be rejected for the reason which the plea under consideration urges, then must all, or nearly all, human laws be condemned and rejected for the same reason: for they have always been the subject of controversy, and have given birth to every variety of interpretation, which the interest or ingenuity of men could suggest. But the candid and the upright, will, on this account, neither reject the one, nor abandon the other.

Some have professed to indulge doubts of the divine authority, truth and moral influence of christianity, on account of many of its professors walking disorderly, and indulging themselves in practices which are evidently sinful and injurious to society. This charge, we confess, is too well founded for denial, and is a fact deeply to be lamented by every sincere disciple of the christian religion. Yet it

ought to be remembered, that this is not the fault of religion, but the sin of its possessor. You might with as much propriety condemn the wholesome laws of our land, because there are individuals professing to be the friends of good government, who, nevertheless, openly, and habitually transgress these laws, as to condemn and reject christianity because some of its professors are guilty of transgressing its divine and wholesome commands.

Many have doubtless been induced to reject the scriptures, on account of certain doctrines which they have been supposed to teach and enforce: But tracing these impressions to their legitimate source, they will, in almost every instance, be found to be the offspring of early catechetical instruction: And my hearers, we are all undoubtedly aware, that early impressions are frequently the most deep and lasting. It may be proper here to notice a few examples, of such rejections, the most of which have come under the observation of your speaker.

The popular theory of *election* and *reprobation*, to states directly opposite and unending, has frequently been urged as an insuperable barrier to the belief of divine revelation. For it is contended with great assurance, that this doctrine is at war with the justice and benevolence of God, as displayed in the order and munificence of his surrounding providence: That it exhibits the character of the Creator in the light of reprehensible partiality, and infinitely hostile to the happiness of countless millions of his own offspring! But my hearers, this objection can have no just bearing against the scriptures, but merely against certain interpretations which have been given of detached passages, by particular sects of christian professors. And you might, with equal propriety, condemn the most wholesome and salutary law of our country, because some ingenious lawyer, in pleading a doubtful cause, has given that *law* an offensive interpretation; as to reject and condemn the scriptures for the reason here alledged.

By another class, the doctrine of the Trinity is

seized as a pretext for renouncing the authority of the Bible, and appealing to the volume of nature as their only guide. To the volume of nature, there can be no reasonable objection, so far as its instructions extend. But why renounce the Bible? The objection here proposed, has no bearing against revelation—it is merely an objection to the popular interpretation of a few isolated passages of the New Testament: and like the former, is the offspring of human wisdom. It cannot be denied that the evangelical writings clearly teach, that “to us there is but one God,” and that Jesus “is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” But admitting they taught the doctrine of the *Trinity*: Does *nature* rectify the error? Does it infallibly teach us that there is but one God? No—nor can it be proved, by an appeal to nature, that there are not as many gods as the heathen mythology maintains.

Again—The doctrine of *endless misery*, whose very thought infuses horror and despair into every region of the soul, and haunts the reflection of guilty mortals, is brought forward as a justifiable reason for rejecting the doctrines of the Bible. It is contended, with much apparent plausibility, that if this doctrine be worthy of credit, it must have been in pursuance of an original and eternal design of the Creator: since with him there can be nothing new; nor does his nature and perfections admit of any “variableness or shadow of turning.” The doctrine appears, therefore, to many of the most reflecting, to be the same, in substance, with that of *unconditional election and reprobation*. And so long as the smiles and blessings of Divine Providence appear to be impartial and universal, skeptics will appeal to this doctrine to justify their unbelief of revelation. But the answers which were applied to the foregoing objections, may be urged with equal success in the present case. For this doctrine as really depends upon the popular interpretation of certain expressions in the New Testament, denoting duration, as a stream depends on its fountain. It is therefore



futile to depend upon the interpretations of men, for the meaning of the sacred text, when their expositions are often at war with the original sentiments intended to be conveyed by the text. The New Testament stands upon a foundation entirely different; and assures us that "the tender mercies of the Lord are over all his works,"—that he is "no respecter of persons." Hence it is obvious, that notwithstanding this doctrine should be rejected, the Bible may nevertheless be received and credited. For you are doubtless aware that multitudes believe the Bible, yet reject this doctrine with the deepest abhorrence. With such, it is in vain to plead the absolute *free agency* of man; for they insist that no agency could have been imparted to the creature, whose effects were not foreseen; and in case it was known to the Creator, that such an agency would, on the whole, prove injurious to the creature, the gift itself would prove the Deity unkind, and as really impeach his justice, as the hypothesis of election, which we have before considered.

There are others, who lightly esteem, and even question the inspiration of the scriptures, on the supposition that they teach the *equal happiness* of all men at death. Such allege that a vast disparity is seen in the conduct of men, in this world; and that the most virtuous and upright often endure every kind of misfortune and affliction; end their days in poverty and wretchedness, and have scarcely tasted the cup of joy and contentment. That the Bible teaches the doctrine of a just and righteous retribution, according to every man's works; yet by limiting both the one and the other to this state of being, such rewards appear not to be administered; nor yet is the design of punishment secured, since the acknowledged object of humbling, subduing, and reforming the sinner, is not secured by any course of discipline of which he is the subject in the present life! That on the other hand, they often go out of *the world*, while engaged in the prosecution of the *most daring* and high-handed wickedness, bearing

all the marks of determined hostility to the laws of heaven and earth ! We readily admit that this would be a serious objection to the scripture ; and that in case they taught such a doctrine, the task of reconciling them with matters of fact, which pass under our observation, would be hopeless. But why urge this hypothesis as an objection to revelation ? It has no connexion with the scriptures ; but like those which have already been considered, is opposed only to the interpretation of certain portions of scripture, which, with the great body of professing christians, is regarded as an extravagant creation of human fancy. It is well understood by this congregation, that your speaker most ardently and sincerely believes the scriptures to contain a faithful revelation from God, and that its holy instructions are able to make us wise unto salvation. And while he rejects the sentiments we have been considering, as unscriptural, he endeavors most scrupulously to maintain the doctrine, that God "will reward every man according to his works ;" nor will he presume to "limit the holy one of Israel" to the present life of man on earth, for the punishments of sin, or the rewards of virtue. He will rest contented with the glorious prospect which revelation unfolds, and rejoice in the confident anticipation of the final "Restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began."

Multitudes have fallen in with the plausible and subtle objections of skepticism, for want of suitable information concerning the general subjects which the christian religion embraces. Christianity is a subject which cannot be comprehended at a single glance ; nor can its evidences be clearly investigated without the devotion of time and serious reflection. Whoever expects to become acquainted with the doctrines, hopes and evidences of the gospel, without devoting his mind to the discipline of serious inquiry and investigation, will find himself *mistaken in the anticipation, and will, it is to be*

feared, either become an ignorant enthusiast, or shortly sally into the vortex of infidelity. The Saviour of the world was aware of this fact, and therefore exhorted his countrymen to "*search the scriptures.*" And this exhortation is still more needful at the present day, when so many allurements await the profession of christianity, and so many temptations are exerting their influence to lead us astray.

It is a lamentable truth, however, that there are but few, who seriously engage in the investigation of the evidences on which the credibility of the gospel depends. The greater part of mankind are either too much engrossed with the cares and perplexities of life; or are too indifferent to the infinite concerns of religion, to enter deeply and feelingly into the investigation of its principles and evidences. Among the great mass of mankind, but few have the patience to enter the field of honest and laborious inquiry, and to push their investigations so far as to detect the haughty pretensions of infidelity, or to be able to meet and repel the insidious attacks of infidel philosophy; which, like the camelion, changes its hues as often as it comes in contact with a different object. An intimate acquaintance with prophecy and history is indispensable to the success and certain triumph of revealed religion. But how few there are who are disposed to devote a sufficient share of their time and attention to master a subject of such importance. Those who are satisfied with the internal evidences of the gospel, and such as are exempted from serious doubt by the force of early education, do not often discover the necessity of all this labor and time, and therefore leave the subject to be investigated by those who have both the leisure and inclination.

The infidelity of all ages has acquired, for the most part, the little popularity which it has been able to boast, by assuming the character of a lofty and commanding philosophy, which casts aside, and affects to pity and deplore the vulgar prejudices of ignorance, and proposes to raise the human

race above the degraded condition to which they have been reduced by the desolating influence of sordid superstition. It appeals to the pride of the human heart, and flatters the vanity of those whom it designs to allure from their allegiance to the cause of revealed truth. No weapon which it has ever employed, has proved more successful: For nothing was ever more congenial to that native self-esteem, which enters so largely into the constitution of the human character, than the desire and prospect of being distinguished for singular fortitude, and a noble elevation of thought, above the grovelling prejudices of mankind. So artfully has modern skepticism applied its influence to the native vanity and pride of the human heart, that it has often induced the unsuspecting youth to believe that a renunciation of revelation would be the means of distinguishing them as philosophers, and men of extensive and useful knowledge. Thus has the flattering appeals of infidelity, to one of the strongest passions of men, turned aside the feet of youth from the path of religion, and blighted the fairest prospects of happiness.

There is another cause which exerts a powerful influence upon the minds of men, unfavorable to the reception and practice of that pure and undefiled religion, so clearly taught in the scriptures of the New Testament. I allude to the love of sinful pleasure, which, to a greater or less extent, predominates in the hearts of every class of human beings. It is well known that the preceptive authority of the gospel of Christ, imposes restraints upon every passion of human nature, requiring that these passions be kept, or circumscribed, in their indulgence, within the bounds of innocence and justice. The reasons in vindication of this law of restriction, are too obvious to require any explanation, since the multiplied examples of their unrestrained indulgence have often deluged nations in blood, and uniformly tended to prostrate innocence, and *sunder the purest ties that bind society together.*

Pride is one of the most subtle passions which is nurtured in the human heart. Its influence is diffused through the thoughts, the looks, the language, sentiments and actions of mankind: But the love of pleasure, prompted by the impetuous current of human passions, often renders its possessor absolutely impatient of all restraint, and frequently urges him on the most daring adventures, regardless of all the bitter consequences which may possibly result to individuals or to community at large. Either the authority of the gospel, therefore, must be disregarded, or sinful pleasure, with every passion which its indulgence requires, must be held in absolute and continual subordination. Those who are strongly disinclined to forego the momentary gratifications of sinful indulgence, are easily persuaded to throw off the stern restraints which christianity imposes, by adopting that kind of philosophy which acknowledges no other guide but nature, and resolves the whole science of happiness into the gratification of temporal desire.

The dignified humility which the religion of Jesus Christ requires, and the lessons of equality which diversify its instructions, are so incompatible with the suggestions of human pride, and are supposed to detract so much from the distinctions of rank, birth and fortune, which are the boast of thousands, that the temptation to reject its authority, and to assume a loftier carriage than its self-denying doctrines will either justify or admit, acquires additional strength, and often precipitates its victim into the vortex of infidelity, and deprives him of all the advantages and refinements of moral virtue, which spring from faith in the covenant of divine grace, and hope in the unfailing promise of eternal life. Hence the necessity of fortifying the youthful mind against all these allurements, and of encouraging them in the early cultivation of all the graces and virtues which the gospel of a risen Saviour enjoins.

*In closing this discourse, I shall mention one, and but one more cause, which tends to induce mankind*

to reject the wholesome instructions of revelation. There is in the heart of every human being, something which tells him that he is a sinner; and he is apprized by the plainest instructions of the Bible, that sin disqualifies him for the approbation of God and the happiness of heaven. It is the language and sentiments of revelation, which he perceives to be the cause of his disquietude; and unwilling to abandon those pursuits from which he hopes to derive both pleasure and profit; disturbed by the consciousness of guilt, and assured by the warning voice of revelation that the Judge of quick and dead will render to him a just recompense of reward, he becomes impatient to free himself from the dread of punishment, as well as from all the restraints which the gospel has imposed; and thus to enjoy a more unrestrained liberty to follow the impulse of all his unchastened and unsanctified desires. To accomplish all this, and stifle the admonitions of conscience, he seizes upon every plausible pretext to justify a renunciation of the scriptures. Like the Jews of old, he soon acquires the art of evading the plainest evidence of truth, and finally becomes a proficient in the fearful labyrinths of skeptical philosophy. Instead of forsaking the practice of sin, by turning to the obedience of Christ, he augments the aggregate of his offences and his condemnation, relinquishes all the exhilarating anticipations of future beatitude, and finally drags out a precarious existence, "without God and without hope in the world!" Beware, then, my friends, of these fatal allurements, and be admonished by the wisdom from on high, to choose "the better part."

## LECTURE XV.

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ST. JOHN, x. 20, 21.

"And many of them said, He hath a devil and is mad ; why hear ye him ? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind ?"

In my last Lecture upon this subject, I briefly replied to some of the principal and popular objections to the gospel of Christ, and remarked upon some of the obvious and leading causes of infidelity. The design of our present labors is to consider the moral influence of skepticism, notice the acknowledgments of skeptical writers in favor of revealed religion, and contrast the hopes of infidelity with those which christianity unfolds. To determine what is the moral influence of skeptical opinions, we are not at liberty to select those who are, to all outward appearance, the most upright and virtuous among the opposers of revealed religion; for it is well known that such men have been educated in, and are influenced by, principles totally different from those which they now profess. And to do them justice, we frankly confess that some of them are examples of sobriety, justice, benevolence and probity; which render their lives worthy of commendation. But it will not, it cannot be pretended, that they have derived these good moral principles by which they are governed, from examples or sentiments which are at war with the christian religion. They must have been the effect of a purer influence, and of a system infinitely more refined than that of any theory of infidelity which has ever been presented to the notice of mankind. It is a fact of universal notoriety, that the early impressions which men receive, whether good or bad, produce an astonishing effect upon their lives, their moral *feelings* and habits of thinking, even through the *whole* course of their mortal existence: So that in

order to test the legitimate influence of skeptical philosophy, we ought to select examples, where the influence of christian instruction and christian principles have never been exerted, and where these have never had the opportunity of proving the strength of their salutary powers. Let this be done, and we shall look in vain for a single example of reformation, through all the ranks of Atheistical or of Deistical philosophy.

My hearers, you may plod through all the volumes of ancient and modern literature, and scrutinize every page of ancient and modern history ; and we challenge you to produce a single example to show that the principles of infidelity have resulted in the reformation of a *libertine*, a man of intemperate habits, a thief, a man of profanity, an extortioner, a liar, or a tyrant or oppressor of man ! The annals of Deism and Atheism, with all their pretensions to philosophy and superior wisdom, do not afford an example of a single convert to their principles, who, in consequence of embracing either the one or the other, has been led to break off from a course of sinful practices, or been checked in the career of vicious indulgence. They have never turned the dissolute from the pursuit of intemperate and sinful pleasures, nor restrained the propensities of one of their proselytes for the most criminal and voluptuous indulgence ! What, then, has infidelity done to recommend itself to the favorable notice of the wise and reflecting part of community ? We answer, *nothing*. But we will tell you what it has done. It has labored to release men from all the wholesome restraints of religion and conscience ! For discovering the insufficiency of human laws and penalties to restrain the licentiousness of man, it has plied all its ingenuity and strength to extinguish the latent fire of devotion, and to efface the impression of man's accountability to the moral law of his Maker : and wherever it has proved successful in these attempts, it has broken down the wholesome barriers to vice,



sundered the purest ties of virtue and religion, and fostered the growth and indulgence of every impure and unwieldy propensity of human nature ! It has never effected the penitential return of a single sinner from the evil of his ways, nor engaged the heart of one of its subjects in the pursuit of practical godliness. But on the other hand, it has emboldened the heart of many an unsuspecting youth, to break through all the restraints of early religious instruction, to trample upon the holy mandates of inspiration, to scoff at the authority of the gospel of Christ, and wantonly to swell and strengthen the impetuous current of every unholy desire. Alas, for the folly and madness of infidelity ! Every friend of God, every lover of moral order and virtue, and every member of human society whose heart glows with the elevated and ennobling sentiments of generous philanthropy, must weep over the moral ruins which it has occasioned, and pity the misguided zeal of its deluded votaries.

We see that its moral influence tends to desolation and misery, and that it aims to prostrate the fairest temple on which the smiles of Heaven ever rested—the temple of moral virtue and truth ! That it unbridles the passions of the vicious, endangers the virtue of innocence, and looks with unconcern upon the dark rolling waters of iniquity, without an apparent effort to stay their impetuous torrent, or to snatch the deluded victim of its power from the hasty current that bears him to the gulf of wretchedness, to the ocean of ruin ! It possesses no feature that is lovely or attractive to the serious, reflecting and religious mind, nor a solitaty characteristic influence that is not dreaded by every friend to moral virtue and religion. The duties of piety and devotion are excluded from its assemblies, and the refined enjoyments of evangelical faith are the objects of its scorn and derision ! Surely, then,

“It is an object of such hideous mein,  
That to be hated, needs but to be seen.”

Here, my friends, you may be relieved from the odious picture of infidelity, so painful to the mental vision of every virtuous mind, and employ your thoughts in surveying the lovely features of christianity, and in admiring the habiliments of innocence and peace with which she is adorned. So obvious and impressive are her moral charms, that the pen of infidelity itself, though usually dipped in gall, has been forced to record her merits! With the encomiums which unbelievers have bestowed upon the christian religion, skeptics have no reason to find fault; nor can they be rejected without the sacrifice of reason and conscience. Lord Herbert, of the *seventeenth* century, though a deistical writer of considerable note, styles christianity "the *best* religion,"\* and confesses that all the doctrines, ordinances, precepts and sacraments which it contains, have for their object the establishment of five essential articles, in which he supposes all religion to consist.

Tindale, a deistical author of the succeeding age, acknowledges that "Christianity itself, stripped of all additions which policy, mistake, and the circumstances of time have made to it, is a most holy religion."† Chubb, another skeptical writer of the same century, has expressed an opinion, that if christianity could be separated from the impurity which has been blended with it, it would afford a clearer light, and be more safe as a guide to mankind, than any other traditionary religion, and better adapted to the improvement and perfection of human nature.‡ Lord Bolingbroke, a learned and celebrated English skeptic, considers christianity as a most amiable and useful institution, and declares that "No religion ever appeared in the world whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind." To these, he adds the following plain and frank acknowledg-

\* Herbert, *Relig. Laici*. p. 9, 10.

† Christianity as old as Creation, p. 382, 8vo.

‡ Chubb's *Posth. Works*, vol. ii. p. 370.

ments of the excellency of the christian religion—  
“ Besides natural religion, there are two other parts into which christianity may be analyzed ; duties superadded to those of the former, and articles of belief, which reason could neither discover nor comprehend. Both the duties required to be practised, and the propositions required to be delivered, are concisely and plainly expressed in the original gospel, properly so called, which Christ taught and his four evangelists recorded.” Of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, he confesses, that “ No institutions can be imagined more simple, nor more void of all those pompous rites and theatrical representations which abound in the religions of the heathens and Jews, than these were in their origin. They were not only innocent, but profitable ceremonies, because they were extremely proper to keep up the spirit of true natural religion, by keeping up that of christianity; and to promote the observance of moral duties, by maintaining a respect for the revelation that confirmed them. I will not say, the belief that JESUS was the MESSIAH, is the only article of belief necessary to make men christians. There are other things, doubtless, contained in the revelation he made of himself, dependent on and relative to this article, without the belief of which christianity would be very defective. The system of religion that Christ published, and his evangelists recorded, is a complete system to all the purposes of religion, natural and revealed; that it contains all the duties of the former: it enforces them by asserting the divine mission of the publisher, who proved his assertion at the same time, by his miracles: It enforces the whole law of faith, by promising rewards and threatening punishments, which he declares he will distribute when he shall come to judge the world. The gospel is, in all cases, one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity. And the *miracles wrought by him, in the mild and beneficent spirit of christianity, tended to the good of mankind.*

The political views of *Constantine* in the establishment of christianity, were to attach the subjects of the empire more firmly to himself and his successors; and the several nations which composed it, to one another, by the bonds of a religion common to them all; to soften the ferocity of their armies; to reform the licentiousness of the provinces, and by infusing a spirit of moderation and submission to government, to extinguish those principles of avarice and ambition, of injustice and violence, by which so many factions were formed, and the peace of the empire so often and so fatally broken; no religion was so well calculated as christianity seemed to be, to effect all these purposes." In a word, he expresses his conviction, that "genuine christianity was taught of God—was revealed by God himself—that it is absurd and impious to assert that the divine Logos revealed it incompletely or imperfectly—and that its simplicity and plainness shows it was designed to be the religion of *all mankind*, and likewise manifests the *divinity* of its original."\*

Rousseau, the learned and accomplished skeptical philosopher of the *eighteenth* century, who opposed the prophecies and miracles of the scriptures, with all the powers of his gigantic mind, offers the following tribute of respect for, and commendation of the scriptures, and of the character and doctrines of Jesus Christ, which are worthy of being transmitted to the latest posterity:

"I confess that the *majesty* of the *scriptures* strikes me with admiration, and that the *purity* of the *Gospel* hath its influence on my heart! Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction; how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the scriptures! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage, whose history it contains, should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast or an ambitious sectary?

\*See his works, vol. iv. pp. 281, 282, 294, 301, 302, 304, 316, 349.

What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind; what subtlety, what truth in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where is the philosopher, who could so live and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation? When *Plato* described his imaginary good man with all the shame of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he gave a description of the character of Jesus Christ; the resemblance was so striking, that all the christian Fathers perceived it.

What *prepossession*, what *blindness* must it be to compare Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus, to Jesus, the son of Mary! What an infinite disproportion is there between them! Socrates, dying without pains or ignominy, easily supported his character to the last; but if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was any thing more than a vain sophist.

He invented, it is said, the theory of morals. Others, however, had before put them in practice; he had only to say, therefore, what they had done, and to reduce their examples to precepts. But where could Jesus learn, among his competitors, that pure and sublime morality, of which he only, hath given us both precept and example?

The death of Socrates, peaceably philosophizing with his friends, appears the most agreeable that could be wished for; but that of Jesus, expiring in the midst of agonizing pains, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared!

Socrates, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it; but Jesus, in the midst of excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors! Yes! if the life and death of Socrates were those of a *Sage*; the life and death of Jesus were those of a *God*!

Shall we suppose the evangelical history a mere *fiction*? Indeed it bears not the marks of fiction; on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which no one presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ.

It is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such an history, than that one only should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the gospel, the marks of the truth of which are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the Hero.”\*

Gibbon, the learned and celebrated author of the “History of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire,” acknowledges that “the prevalence of the Christian Religion was owing to the convincing evidence, itself, of the doctrines, and the ruling providence of its great Author:” And he adds, “Every privilege that could raise the proselyte from earth to heaven; that could exalt his devotion; or secure his happiness, was still reserved for the members of the christian church.”†

The authors which I have here quoted, are selected from the most celebrated, able, philosophical, classical, and historical writers that have ever appeared in the ranks of infidelity. They have volunteered such testimonies of respect, such tributes of acknowledgment in favor of christianity and the whole system of revealed religion, as they could not in conscience withhold, and which they never ventured to bestow upon any other system of religion which has ever been published to the world. These concessions of the vast and salutary advantages which christianity bestows on man, in a moral, political and social point of view, seem to be extorted from its very enemies, by the irresistible force of

\* This quotation from Rousseau, is taken from a pamphlet entitled “The Age of Infidelity;” published in answer to Paine’s “Age of Reason,” by a Layman.

† See Decline of the Roman Empire, Vol. i. pp. 536, 542.

its truth and moral excellence, which are so obvious to every attentive reader of the sacred pages.

Even one of the most gross and outrageous defamers of revealed religion, and of christianity in particular; who appeared to take delight in exhausting his ingenuity and strength to abuse and villify the scriptures, and who has poured forth, all the bitterness of his unprincipled satire and envenomed spleen against the purest institution that has ever cheered the abodes of human wretchedness; after all his coarse invective and abuse, *admits the possibility of a divine revelation*, declares his belief that Jesus Christ existed, preached most excellent morality, inculcated the equality of man, that he was crucified, and that the great trait in his character was philanthropy.\*

In the productions of almost every author who has written against Christianity, similar concessions and recommendations are to be found, in favor of the moral character and influence of revealed religion: And while we acknowledge the justness of their encomiums, we are equally astonished at their inconsistency, in opposing what they themselves pronounce to be the best of all possible systems for the elevation, refinement and happiness of mankind.

So plain and familiar is the fact, to all those who have taken the pains to examine the preceptive code of the New Testament, that it solemnly enjoins all the duties of justice, equity, patience, sobriety, industry, truth, compassion, gentleness, forgiveness, forbearance, meekness, peace, benevolence and universal philanthropy; that it would be totally unnecessary and useless to quote examples for its confirmation. Indeed, the fact is abundantly established by the united voice of all the enemies, as well as by the friends of divine revelation. And here I beg leave to ask the opposers of christianity, how they can soberly justify their conduct, in a social and political point of view, when they array themselves against the purest rules of practical virtue, which if reduced to experiment, would dignify and elevate the moral character of society, spread and extend the blessings of peace and good government, promote order and harmony through all the ranks of social and intelligent beings, and remove such an aggregate of crime and misery from the world? It will be no *solution* of our inquiry to be told, that those who profess

\* *Age of Reason*, pp. 13, 22, 50.

to be its friends and supporters have injured its reputation, by abusing its authority and violating its commands; for they might as well, and with equal propriety, condemn the wholesome laws of our country, because there have been, and still are men, who, notwithstanding they acknowledge the rightful authority of government, are nevertheless, among the first to violate its wholesome institutions, and disregard its equitable requirements. They cannot but discover, if they will but give the subject a moment's serious reflection, that the fault does not attach itself to the institutions and laws of revealed religion; nor yet to the Author and Founder of that religion; but to those who abuse its authority, violate its commands, disregard its wholesome instructions, and turn a deaf ear to all its warnings and salutary admonitions.

That christianity sternly prohibits all the vices which corrupt and enslave mankind; that it places the most solemn restraints upon human passions; that it forbids the indulgence of *all* and *every* evil thought and design in the heart; that it requires of all its subjects to avoid, not only evil itself, but to "shun every APPEARANCE of evil;" that it prescribes an universal and perfect rule of action, when it demands with the most rational and dignified authority, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," and sanctions and enforces all these sacred rules of duty, not only by the consideration of all the happiness which the practice of these virtues must inevitably yield, but by the solemn assurance and conviction of man's accountability to God, who will "render indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil;" are truths which no skeptic can deny, and which every christian knows to be the character of that religion which he has taken to be the guide of his life.

That it has produced the most salutary effects upon the lives and morals of millions of the human race; the history of all civilized nations most amply attests, and the daily observations of every candid and impartial mind, incontrovertibly confirms. But can the same be said of the influence of any of the systems of ancient heathen philosophy; or of any system of that modern philosophy which rejects the divine authority of revelation? That they never did, and cannot be productive of such happy results, we will



offer you the most substantial proofs which candor can demand.

Cicero, one of the wisest and most accomplished philosophers among the heathen, who flourished about fifty years before the birth of Christ, declares without the least reserve, that *the ancient philosophers never reformed, either themselves or their disciples; and that he knew not of a single example, in which either the teacher or the disciple was made virtuous by their principles.\** Lucian pronounces them a body of tyrants, adulterers and corrupters of youth. Plutarch admits, yea, declares, that Socrates and Plato were as *incontinent* and *intemperate* as any slave; and that Aristotle was a *fop*, a *destroyer* of female innocence, and a *traitor*: While Dian Cassius ascribes to Seneca a character no better than the former. Diogenes and Crates were said to have committed crimes in open day, which I forbear to name, and that without any apparent shame or remorse. Speusippus was an adulterer in principle, and fell a sacrifice to the vengeance of abused and insulted humanity. Aristippus cheated his friend out of money that was left in his hands, refused to educate his children, calling them mere vermin, and committed other crimes which I forbear to name. Menippus murdered himself because he lost a sum of money;—so did Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Cleambrotus, Cato the younger, and Brutus, become their own executioners: While Xenophon was notorious for the crime which dencency forbids our laws to call by its proper name. Plutarch admits these facts, but attempts to apologize for their offences, by saying, that “*though they corrupted their bodies, they made amends for it by improving their souls!*” A most singular and extraordinary apology, and one that can reflect very little credit, either to him or his philosophers. To show that the ancient philosophers were, in practice, consistent with the principles which they inculcated, I beg leave to lay before you a brief statement of what they taught, as collected by Dr. Dwight, late President of Yale College. “Zeno taught, that all crimes were equal; that we ought never to forgive injuries; and that the most abominable lewdness is lawful.”

Both Zeno and Cleanthes taught, that children may as lawfully roast and eat their parents, as any other food.

Diogenes, and the Cynics generally, taught, that parents

\*See Deism Revealed.

may lawfully sacrifice and eat their children; and that there is neither sin nor shame, in the grossest and most public acts of licentiousness!

*Plato* taught, that the same crime is justifiable; and *Cicero*, that it is a crime of small magnitude.

*Lycurgus* encouraged stealing by an express law.—*Aristippus* taught, that both theft and adultery are lawful; *Cicero*, that it is lawful to make war, for the sake of fame, provided it be conducted without unnecessary cruelty.—*Cicero* also taught, that virtue consists in the desire of fame. Of course, Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, and Nadir Kouli Khan, were among the most virtuous of mankind.”\*

Such, my hearers, were some of the doctrines of ancient philosophy, whose systems are so much admired and applauded by modern skeptics. And it must be confessed, that their doctrines are amply delineated in the profusion of those fruits which have been productive of so much misery and disgrace to human society.

Let us now briefly survey the doctrines of that modern philosophy which rejects the divine authority of revelation, and professes to follow the sober dictates of reason. To do this, we must appeal to the doctrines which these philosophers have published to the world. I have already quoted the testimony of some of these modern philosophers in favor of the moral and practical influence of christianity; and you may not be surprised to find them at war with their own confessions; for nothing appears too inconsistent for their speculative minds.

*Lord Herbert* has declared it as his opinion, and lays it down as a truth, that the indulgence of *lust* and *anger* should be no more blamed, than the thirst which is created by a fever, or than the drowsiness which is occasioned by lethargy! Let this sentiment be admitted, and what would follow? Why, all the guilt and criminality of gluttony, the shame of drunkenness, the sin of lewdness, the evil of contention and the wickedness of revenge, are blotted out at a single dash, or even transformed to innocence and virtue!

*Hobbes*, the celebrated English philosopher, maintained, that every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them if he can: He declares that “A subject may lawfully deny Christ before the magistrate, although he

\*See Address to the Students of Yale College, 1797.

believes Christ in his heart—That a ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth, or justice, and can do no wrong to his subjects.”

*Tindall* and *Chubb* maintain that every man must form his own rules of right and wrong, and may rightfully vary them according to every change of circumstance; the latter, that all religions are alike, the belief of a future state is of no use to mankind, and that God does not interpose in human affairs, and has nothing to do with the virtues and vices of human beings. Thus we see that they deny any, and every standard of moral virtue, and dissolve all the bonds of moral obligation, arising from the accountability of man to his Maker.

*Hume* asserts and teaches, that “Adultery must be practiced, if men would obtain all the advantages of life.” This doctrine, were it reduced to practice, would sunder the sacred ties of social and domestic life, and plunge the human race into the most fearful state of wretched incontinence. Nor does this doctrine stop here: for if one gross propensity may be indulged without restraint, then, by the same parity of reasoning, may every propensity be indulged to the same unrestrained extent; and piracy, rapine, and murder, become the lawful employment of every covetous and ambitious adventurer! Doctrine like this needs no comment: Its abominable features are too visible to require a syllable by way of illustration.

*Lord Bolingbroke* asserts, that “man’s chief end is to gratify the appetites and inclinations of the flesh;—that modesty is inspired by mere prejudice;—that Polygamy is a part of the law or religion of nature:”<sup>\*</sup> He also clearly intimates, that the Law or Religion of nature is not violated by adultery;—that there is nothing wrong in palpable licentiousness, except it be in cases of the highest incest! Nay, more, that all men and women are devoid of chastity, and that conjugal fidelity has no existence! His Lordship perhaps might palliate this gross insult, and unmerited slander, by pleading that he measured the whole community by the standard of himself.

I forbear to trouble you with a notice of Shaftesbury, Voltaire, Woolston, Rochester, Wharton and Blount; or with any comment upon their doctrines or their lives; neither of which would afford you pleasure, but swell the picture of depravity, already too painfully disgusting to

<sup>\*</sup>See *Dr. Dwight’s Address*, p. 35.

the mind of modest and religious sensibility. Nor should I esteem any excuse a sufficient apology for the disclosures to which I have been led, in this discourse, were it not for the advantages which it is hoped may result from contrasting the doctrines and moral influence of the gospel, with the opposite character of those with which we are presented in the labored systems of ancient heathen and modern skeptical philosophers.

The contrast is now before you; and I cannot doubt that every candid mind will discover and acknowledge the God-like sweetness, moral beauty, and practical excellence of christianity, while it shrinks with horror from the deadly grasp and pestilential influence of philosophical infidelity!

It is indeed, astonishing to your speaker, that any man can embrace and advocate such systems of *rain philosophy*, and yet cherish in his bosom a single sentiment of real patriotism, or one latent spark of genuine philanthropy! Reason, benevolence, and love of country, all plead with us to beware of their fatal influence; an influence that would wither every lovely flower and blast the choicest fruits, that beautify, adorn, and sweeten the garden of life! That would dissolve every noble and virtuous tie that can bind man to man, or that render society peaceful, prosperous and happy!

We will now proceed to contrast the hopes of skepticism with those which revelation unfolds. And *how*, and *where*, shall I begin this contrast? The task is truly difficult to be performed: Not on account of the prospects which revelation furnishes; but on account of the barrenness of the materials which skepticism affords. A problem in Euclid, even the most difficult problem, is easy of solution when compared with the labor of describing the hopes of skepticism—for it is extremely doubtful whether there ever was, or ever can be, any thing belonging to the systems of infidelity, which have as yet appeared, that can rationally claim the signature of HOPE! But we must patiently labor with such materials as we can find, however scanty and imperfect.

Among all the systems of modern skepticism, we find but one, (and this even very doubtful, as to its sincerity,) which professes to believe in a future intellectual existence, without immediately and plainly contradicting the sentiment. Mr. Paine tells us, that he “hopes for happi-

ness beyond this life." But what is *hope*? It is not a mere *desire*, but *desire* and *belief united*: But *belief*, or *faith*, is impossible, without something which amounts to evidence in the mind, of the reality of that which is the object of desire. Now, what evidence had Mr Paine, to support the hypothesis of a future existence? He certainly could not derive it from *nature*; for *nature* teaches no such truth:—It shows us the certain truth that all its productions have a beginning, growth, maturity and decay; and evinces the succession of new forms: but it furnishes no evidence that the same identical plant or animal survives the dissolution of all its organs; nay, it proves that they do not. From what, then, could he derive this hope? Certainly not from philosophy; for philosophy is "the knowledge of things natural and moral, grounded upon reason and experience." He could not pretend that he had any *experience* of a future existence and happiness,—and as reason cannot embrace a proposition for which there is no evidence; and as there is no such evidence in nature, it follows, undeniably, that he did not believe what he professed, nor had he any hope of future happiness! for he rejected, ridiculed and slandered the scriptures, as a tissue of falsehood and deception: and these contained the only evidence which he could obtain, of future existence and happiness. As skeptics, therefore, can have no hope of future life and happiness, what are their hopes?

We answer—They have nothing to hope for in this life, but a transient period of alternate joys and sorrows, of pleasures and pains, of health and sickness, of honor and disgrace, of prosperity and adversity, of friendship and enmity, of light and darkness; while every joy is embittered by the reflection, that it is soon to be obliterated by the darkness of the grave! He is a prey to continual disappointment, for he finds not the undisturbed enjoyments which can satisfy his desires. All his hopes are bounded by the narrow span of life, and the grave closes in upon all his prospects! How cold and gloomy the thought, that nought but *rottenness* and *eternal oblivion* remains for him, when he shall have dragged out the little remains of this miserable and imperfect existence! Alas, poor man! He is "without God, and without hope in the world." For all that he anticipates, is unworthy of that endearing name. Behold him on the bed of death; a sullen gloom over-spreads his countenance! His wife, his children, gather

around him,—affection kindles in his soul, and nerves him for a new and unspeakable torture,—O the dreadful, the horrid thought, that he shall never see them more! Wildness seizes his brain; his heart-strings burst with unutterable anguish; the crumbling frame of nature yields to the convulsive pangs of death, and sinks to the shades of eternal night!

How different the prospects which revelation unfolds: It diminishes none of the joys and prospects which the present life holds up to view; but heightens and refines the pleasures of their enjoyment. The confidence which it inspires in the unerring wisdom and goodness of God, sweetens every reflection upon the order of his providence, and gives a higher zest to all the bounties which that providence bestows. The hopes which revelation supplies, moderate the sorrows, and lighten all the afflictions, to which we are exposed, in passing through this vale of tears, by assuring us that all our trials are ordered by infinite wisdom, for our good; and that “these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

In seasons of great calamity and danger, they exert a still more visible influence, by arming the soul with a calm and undaunted fortitude, inasmuch as they afford the assurance, that the issue of all events is at the entire disposal of a God of unerring wisdom and almighty power.

By the light which revelation supplies, the believer beholds all the transient joys and blessings of time, moving on like shadows, to usher in a perfect day! Is the companion of his heart’s kindest affections, or the child of his doting fondness, called to enter the dark valley of the shadow of death? his heart is comforted under the heavy load of affliction, by a glorious prospect beyond the grave! Approach now, and behold a father, or a mother, upon the bed of death—What calm, what sweet composure of mind, is their invaluable privilege! As they witness the approach of death, their thoughts extend beyond the grave, and the eye of faith lights on the distant but certain prospect of immortality! While they fold their little ones, the tenderest objects of their mutual affection, in the last affecting embrace for time, their souls are bursting with gratitude to God for the glorious assurance, that they shall soon meet them in a world of unfading bliss, and be clad in the habiliments of immortal joy and praise! It is their

unspeakable privilege to "know, that if this earthly house of their tabernacle were dissolved, they have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

To say nothing of the advantages and infinite consolations which the hopes of the gospel inspire, through all the journey of life; how much they contribute to strengthen and refine every social and virtuous affection of the heart; and what reconciliation and peace they inspire, under all the allotments of a righteous providence,—What can equal their importance in the hour of death? when all earthly prospects are fading upon the sight! O it is then, amidst death's last alarms, that the believing heart, the conscious soul, can "with joy draw water from the wells of salvation," and feel his undying hopes anchor within the veil of glory! All things else are *less than nothing and vanity*, when compared with the hopes of the gospel: The joys which they inspire, are *unspeakable*, because they are *full of glory*! O then, give me these blissful, these invaluable hopes! And if it need be so, strip me of every other comfort; but in mercy, spare my hopes! They shall support my trembling heart amidst the fiercest storms of trouble, and cheer the last faint glimmerings of departing life, with visions of celestial and unending joy!

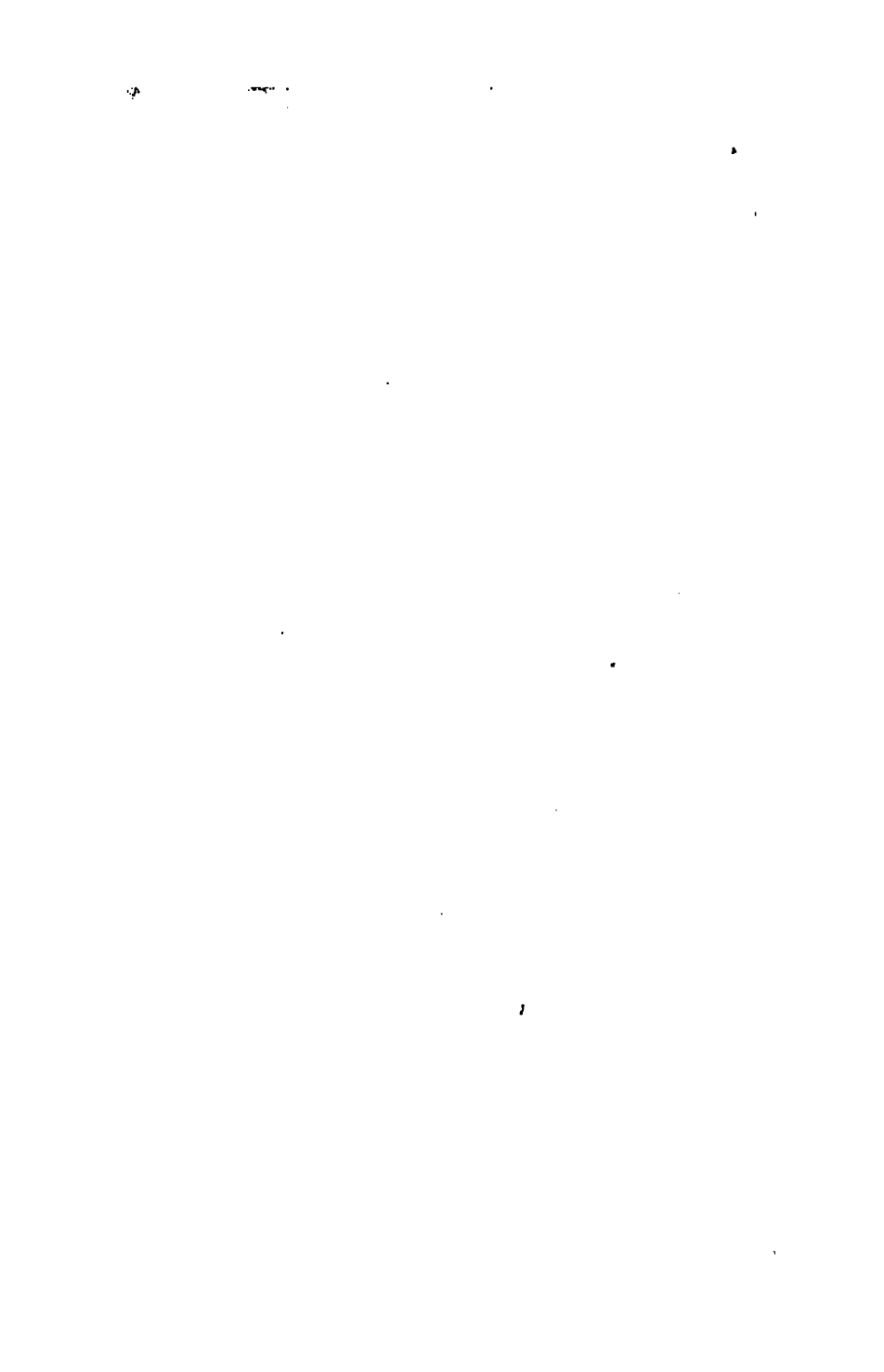
They widen and expand their vision, till they grasp the innumerable myriads of creation; till they encircle a world redeemed, till they swell the full chorus of angels in honor of a Saviour's victorious triumph over all rebellion and death; till they unite the songs of angels and of men, and bear the notes of immortal triumph and salvation, from "every creature in heaven, earth and sea;" till unnumbered millions, that have passed away, and millions of millions yet unborn; yea, till the whole universe, redeemed from sin and death, and ransomed from the power of the grave, join to swell the seraphic raptures of eternity, and bathe in rivers of immortal bliss!

Receive, then, I beseech you, this inestimable treasure, the revelation of the most high God. Let no considerations of pride or shame rob you of a treasure so vast and inconceivable! And remember, that, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: But if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it."









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